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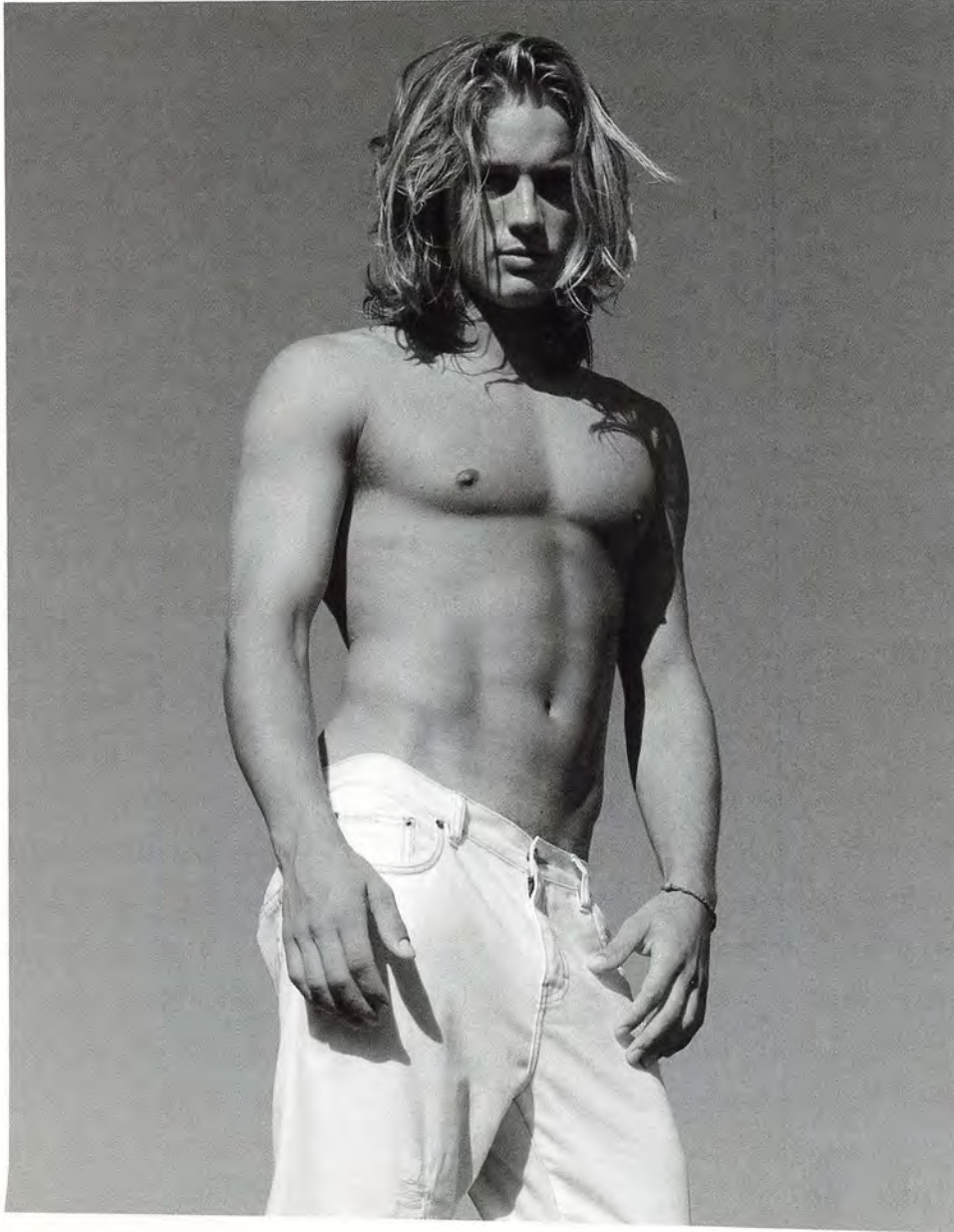
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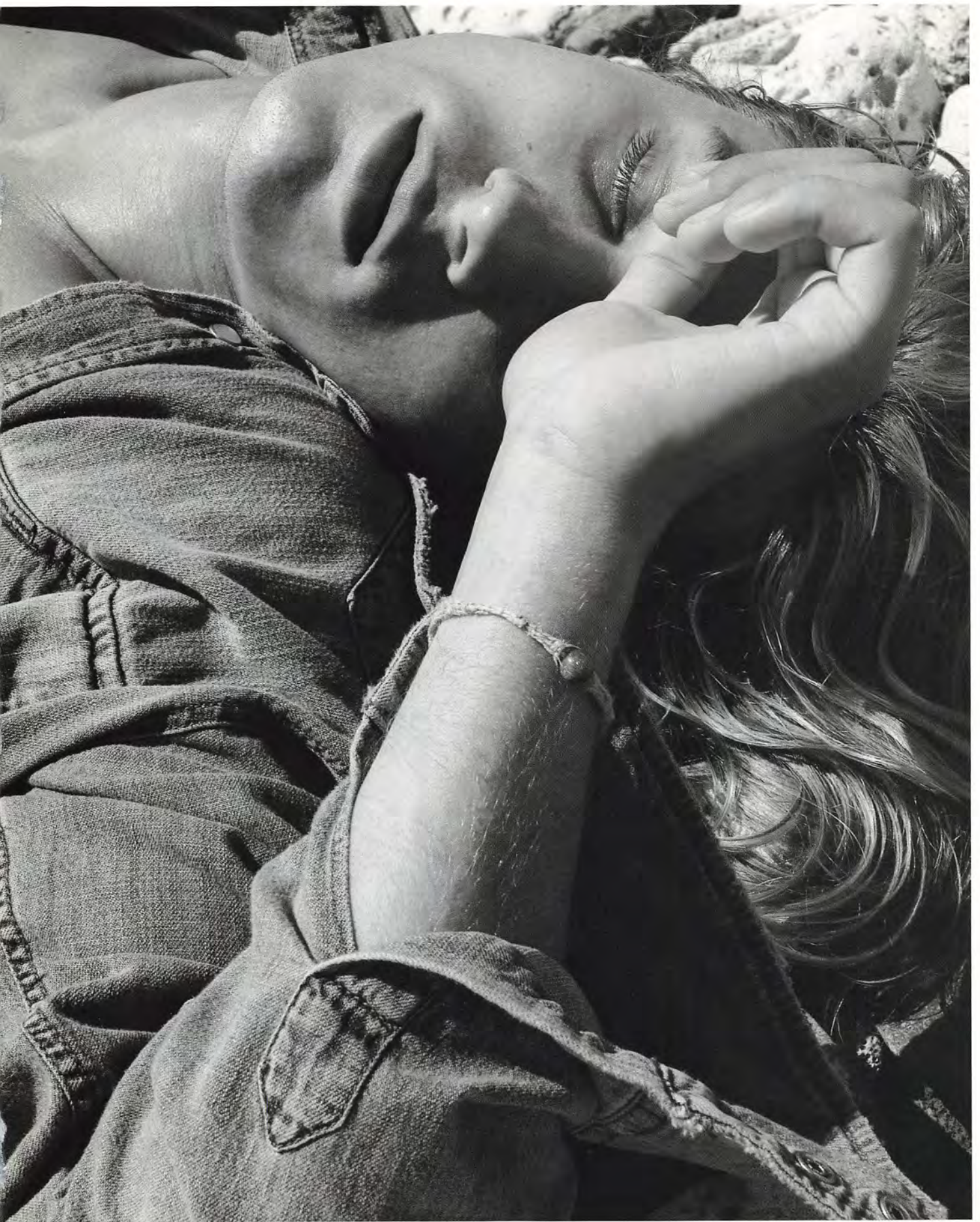
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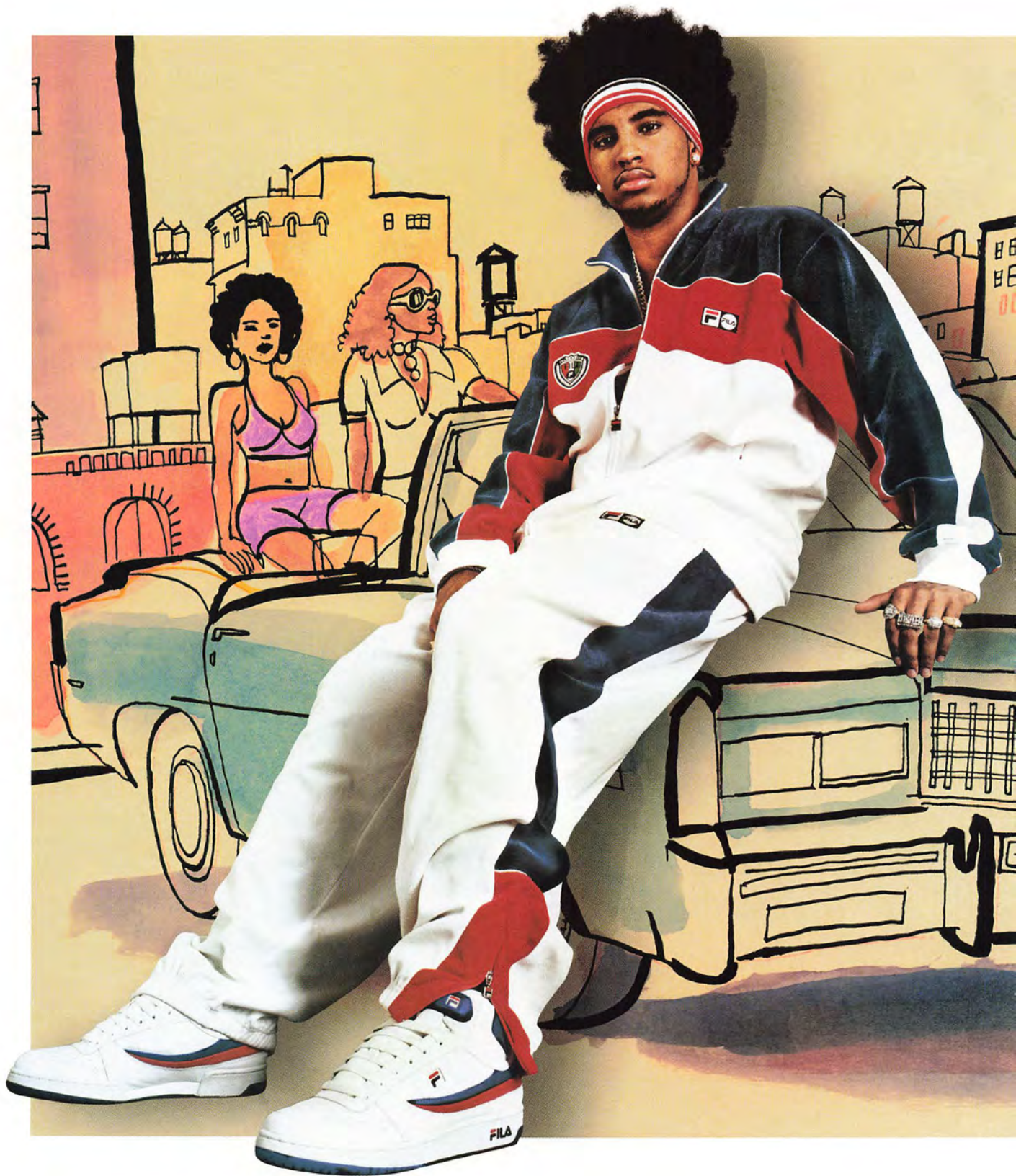
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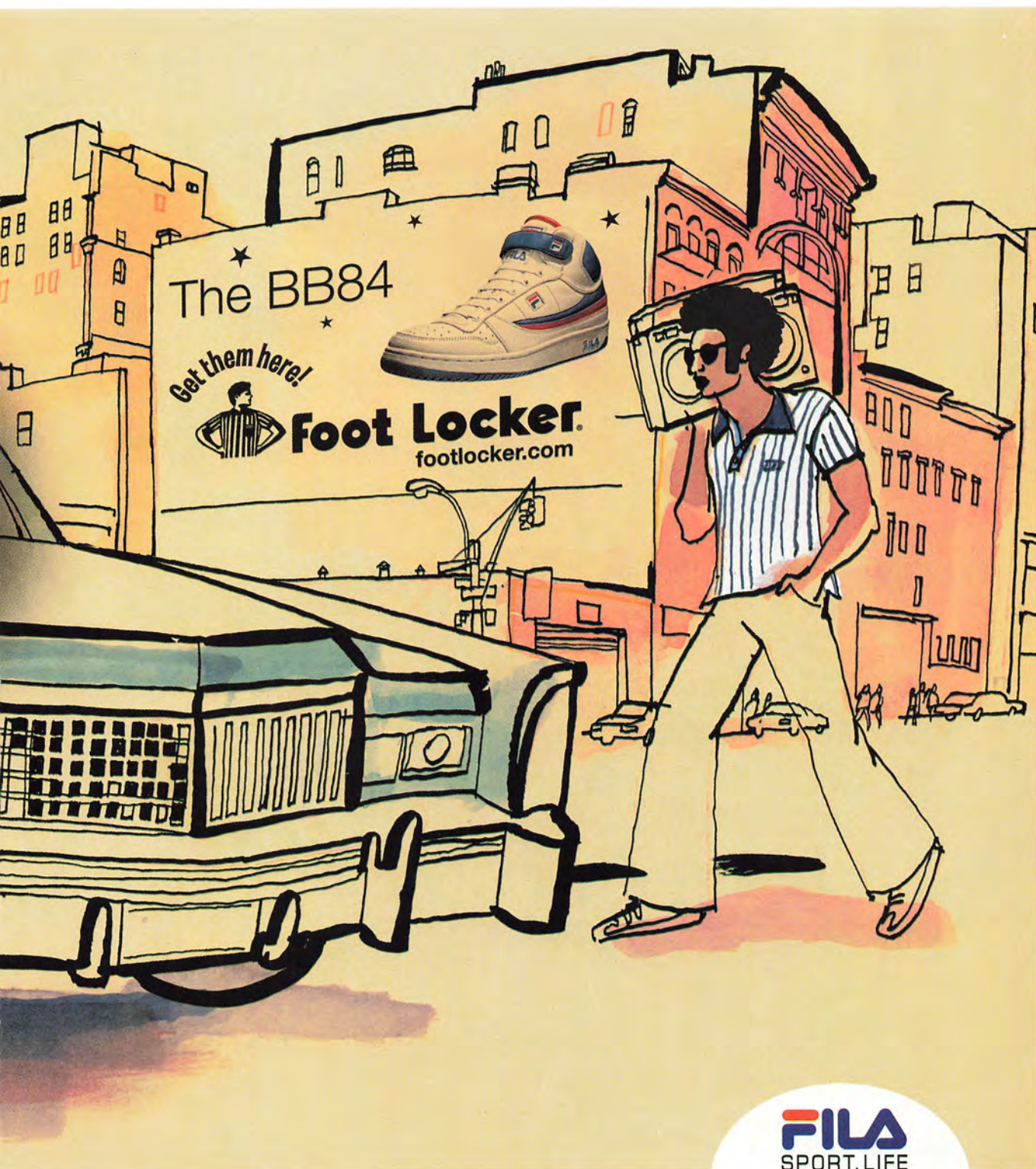






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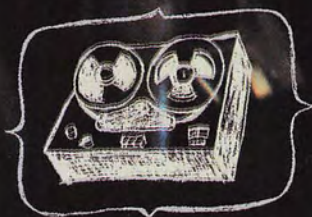


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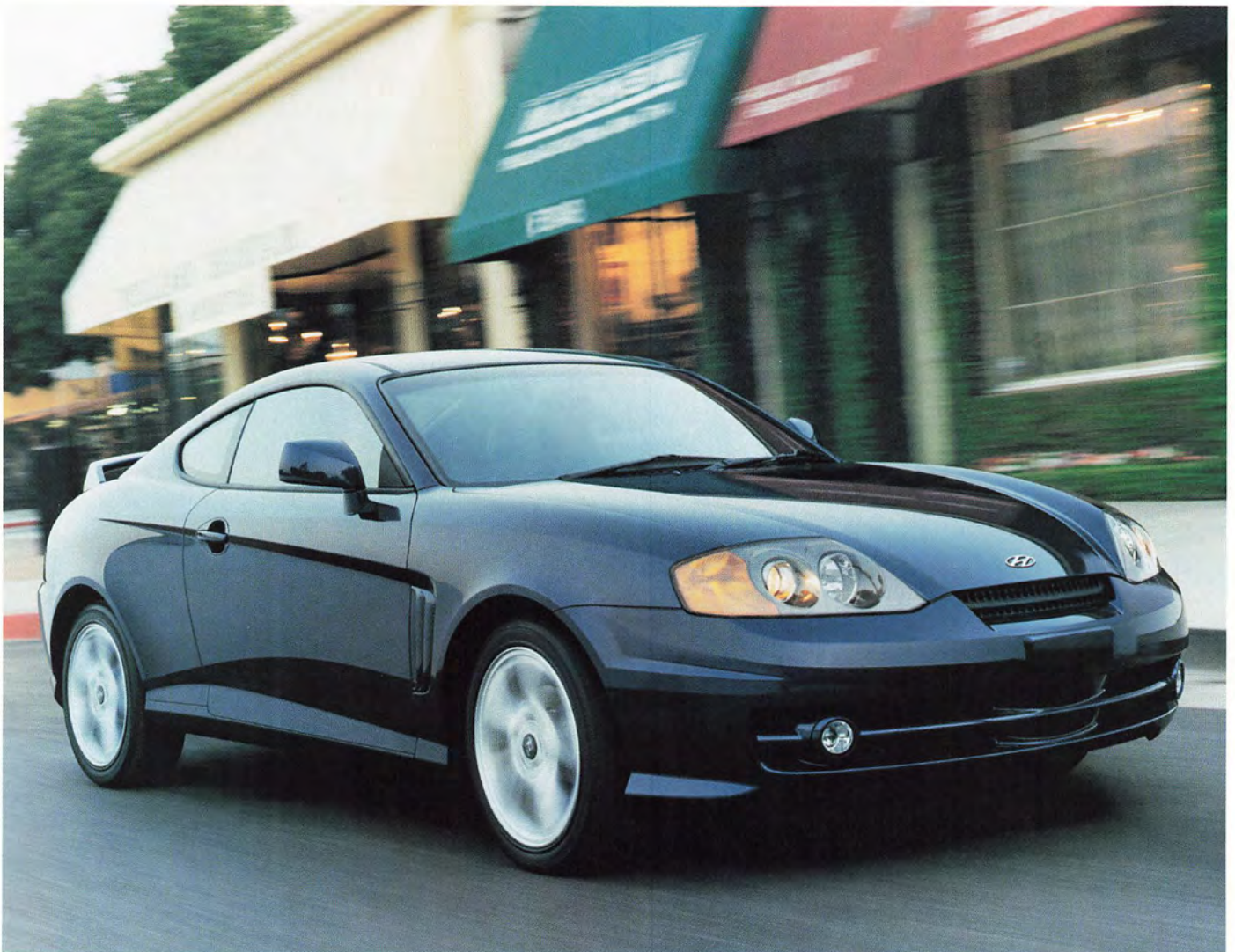


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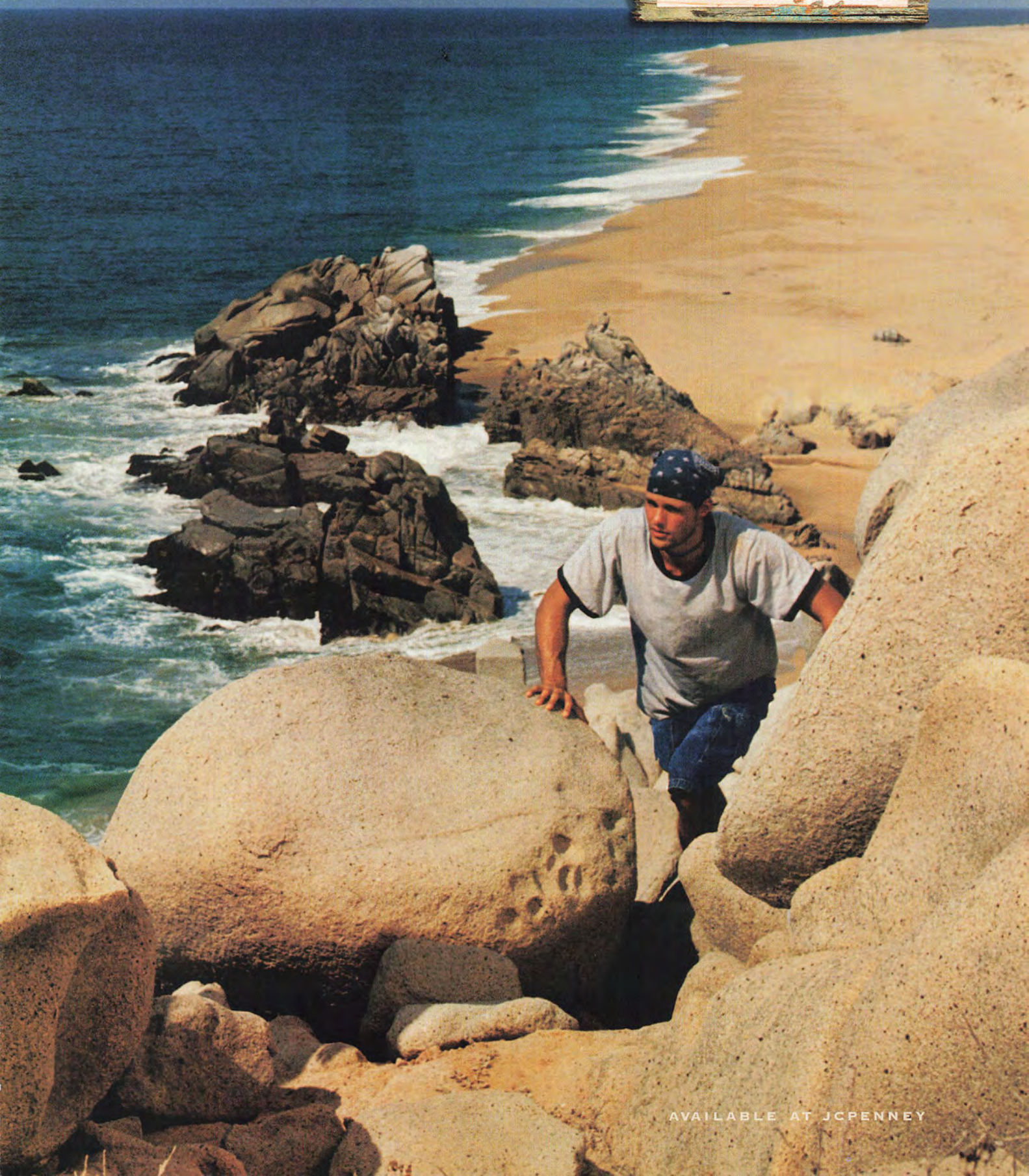


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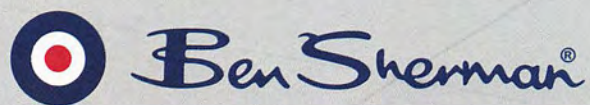
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FEATURES

80 AUDIOSLAVE

The musicians in the band nearly known as ASS are just like their former selves in Rage Against the Machine and Soundgarden: corny and touching, but hard-rockin', too. Says lead singer Chris Cornell: "These three guys saved my life this year!" *Awww.*

86 33 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT BUSTA RHYMES

He stays off the liquor. He's got a hidden camera planted in his Mercedes. He was a canned food-stashin' Y2K paranoid. And 30 other talking points.

90 SHOOT THE STYLIST!

Fashion faux pas, clothing catastrophes, stinky styling: When it comes to looking awful, pop stars are in a league of their own!

94 CHRISTMAS-CONCERT MARATHON

It's a proud yuletide tradition. No, not gifts and reindeer — the radio-station Christmas Concert with the dopey name, the screaming teens and the bored bands. *Blender* bravely hits four shows in four cities to see how much holiday punishment one man can withstand.

98 THE USED MUST SPEND BLENDER'S \$848!

Lucky for this Utah hardcore quartet, a 1979 Cadillac Sedan de Ville can be had for the low, low price of \$400 — and be completely destroyed in a single afternoon, using only supplies purchased at local stores!

104 THE ROCK GODDESS 50

Beyoncé, Mariah, Alicia, Gwen: They make us dance, moan, sweat and wail — and sometimes we even sing along to their CDs, too! C'mon over and spend some time with the 50 sultriest, sexiest women in pop.

116 SHAKIRA

She may be 4 feet, 11 inches of hip-swayin', ass-shakin' ¡Ay, *caramba!*, but the Colombian chanteuse's mind is equally beautiful, full of Walt Whitman and political sermons. "All weapons of mass destruction should be destroyed!" Nuclear disarmament: *mrrrow!*

ON THE COVER >>>>

PHOTOGRAPHY FRANK OCKENFELS 3

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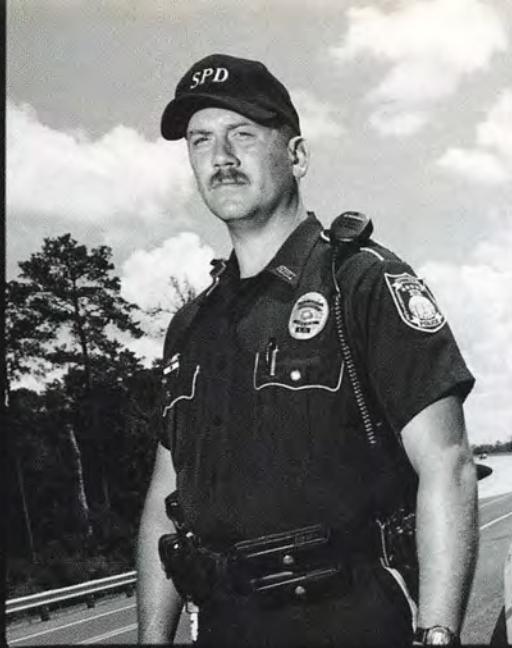
LEATHER SKIRT BY LOST ART, NYC

JEANS BY KOSIUKO

BELT STYLIST'S OWN

CHAIN BELT BY CHANEL

> "I have so much to impart...." SHAKIRA, p.116



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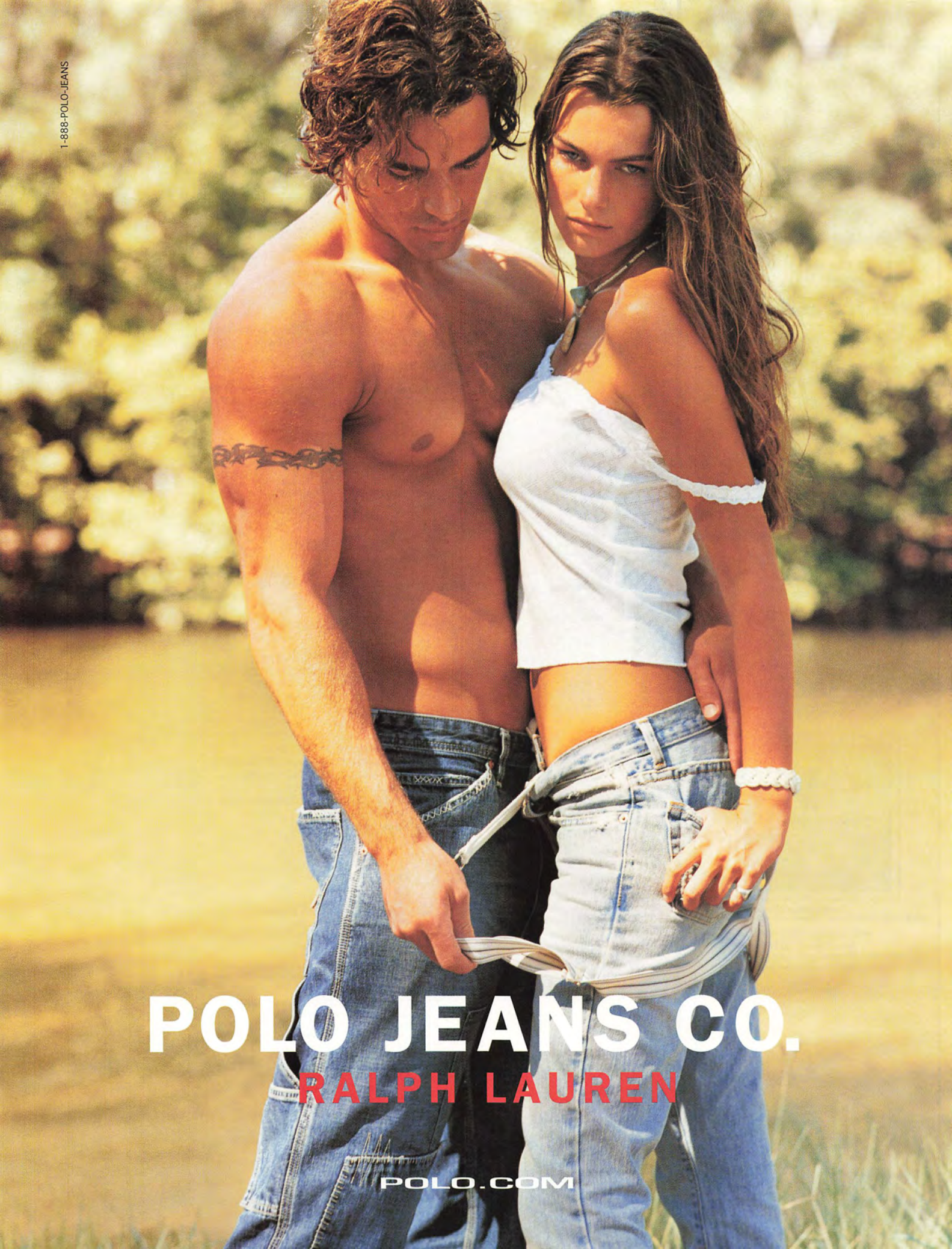
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> "These three guys saved my life this year."

AUDIOSLAVE'S CHRIS CORNELL ON HIS NEW BANDMATES, p80

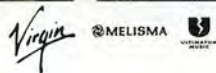


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EVER SINCE THEY BOTH DATED PABLO,
JEN AND KATIE SHARED EVERYTHING.

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

» THERE ARE DOUBTLESS many people who think that being editor in chief of the world's finest music magazine is just one endless carousel of free alcohol and expensive nibbles. And they're right! But sometimes, when I'm at a pop-star gathering — a gala luncheon, perhaps, or some charity event — time can drag a little. At these moments, I like to ease the boredom by playing a little game.



Blender editor with tall rock stars

I imagine myself as the guy in the Bible who had to separate the sheep from the goats. (At least I think it was the Bible — that certainly sounds like the kind of thing people got up to in the Old Testament.) You see, to my mind (if only my mind), pop stars fall into two neatly divisible categories: When you meet them in the flesh, they're either Taller Than You'd Think or, conversely, Smaller Than You'd Think.

Before you ask, I am a manly six feet tall in my socks and therefore have

no height-related ax to grind. But I am nevertheless constantly surprised by the expectation-confounding altitude of pop's leading artists.

Just recently I was stumbling around backstage at a sweaty rock & roll event in Los Angeles when I came across soulful chanteuse Macy Gray and hair-metal kingpin Sebastian Bach. So enormous were they, I was forced to exclaim "You're very tall!" To which Mr. Bach, with remarkable acuity, responded, "Yes, I am." My later research uncovered that Bach is an astonishing six-feet-eight, while Ms. Gray is a skyscraping six feet.

But that's just the tip of a very tall iceberg. Demure Mandy Moore is not a pop pixie at all but actually a rather handy 5-feet-10. Far from being a compact little mop-top, Paul McCartney just misses six feet. The average height of those lanky Strokes is six-feet-one, Nick Cave is six-two, Marilyn Manson six-three, John Mayer a huge six-four and Krist Novoselic — a grunge giant in every sense — is six-feet-seven! They'd all be useful in a fight.

But what about the other end of the spectrum? Pink is a wee five-feet-three (but she looks smaller), while Bono, undeniably of towering pop stature, is a piffling five-eight when you get up close. (No wonder he prefers a Cuban heel.) And don't get me started on Keith Richards! He may list his height as five-nine, but when you meet the legendary Stones guitarist, he seems the perfect size for you to scoop up and put in your pocket.

All of which goes some way to explaining my brilliant idea for this month's cover. The 50 Greatest Pop Stars who are Taller/Smaller Than You'd Think! For some reason the idea was poooh-pooohed by my more sober colleagues. So instead, we opted for the 50 sexiest women in music today. And very nice it is. The cover star is the very beautiful Shakira. She's 4-feet-11, by the way.

I know, I know. *Tiny*, isn't she?

Enjoy the issue!

ANDY PEMBERTON
EDITOR IN CHIEF

7'0"

6'0"

5'0"

4'0"

« SMALLER THAN YOU'D THINK

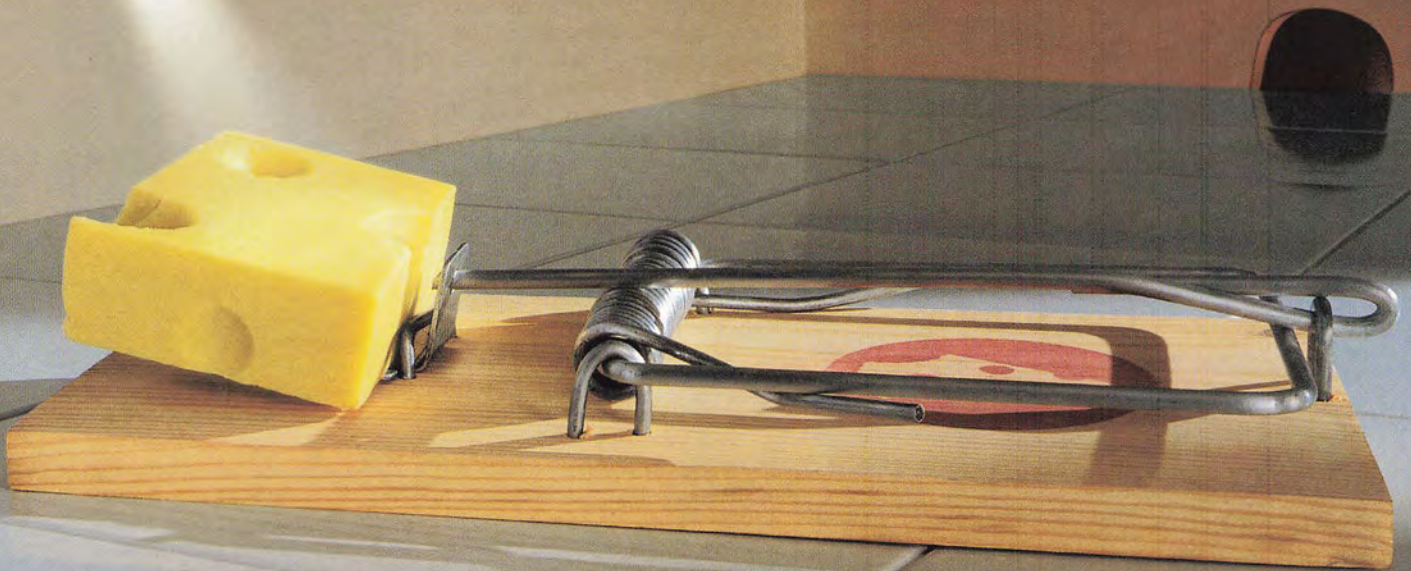
TALLER THAN YOU'D THINK »



Top: Courtesy of Blender. Bottom, from left: Dennis Van Tassel, Doug Liman, Peter Dinklage, John Travolta, Mandy Moore, Paul McCartney, Nick Cave, Marilyn Manson, John Mayer, Krist Novoselic, Keith Richards. Photo: Henry H. Gabe Photos



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JAM MASTER JAY, R.I.P.

The lyric on the spine of your January/February issue, "It's like that, and that's the way it is," is by none other than the late, great Jam Master Jay, from Run-DMC's "It's Like That." Thank you for paying your respects to one of the finest turntablists of the century. He will be dearly missed.

EDWIN MENA, KINGSTON, RHODE ISLAND

UTTERLY DEPRESSING!

The lyric on the last page of your January/February issue ("Yesterday is dead and gone and tomorrow's out of sight") is from Kris Kristofferson's "Help Me Make It Through the Night" — one of the most depressing songs this side of the Mississippi.

LEAH WEBSTER, WASHINGTON, D.C.

SNOOP IS NICE

Snoop Dogg [Dear Superstar, January/February] showed a side of himself that really surprised me. Not only is he off the weed, but he values creative control, listens to Frank Sinatra, likes salads and coaches his kid's football team. Who is this guy, Ward Cleaver?

MILES DENNY, NEW YORK

★ Congratulations to the winner of *Blender's* December crossword puzzle, who walks away with a kickin' XM Sky Fi satellite radio: Marisol Macias of Addison, Illinois. Hell, yeah!

EVERYTHING STINKS TO HELL!

According to a recent music-industry report, new CD sales were down 7 percent in the first half of 2002 compared to the first half of 2001. As a college-educated composer, father of two teenage sons, former Top 40 DJ and regular *Blender* reader, I know why:

LISTEN UP! >>

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Or: your2cents@blender.com. Good luck!



Ringo never did get over his terrible fear of cups.

We're awash in musical feces! Such antisocial music as punk, grunge, alternative, hip-hop and gangsta rap is too often negative, and songwriting quality has dropped significantly. The genius of the Beach Boys, the Beatles, Chuck Berry, the Doobie Brothers and Carl Perkins is overlooked. The last new group I still enjoy is Huey Lewis and the News. Rock has since gone down the toilet. Today's musicians may know how to "rock," but, like the misguided Kurt Cobain, Bono and many who worship them, they don't know how to "roll."

MARK LINDER, GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA
The Beatles — overlooked? Hmm. . .

MY WIFE'S ANNOYED? WHO CARES!

After a long day at work recently, I came home to find a magazine face-down on my bed. This could mean only one thing: My wife had found something she considered indecent in our mailbox. Before picking it up, I said to myself, "Hope it's Christina Aguilera." Did I ever get what I wanted! Thank you, *Blender*, for the insight on Aguilera ["XXXtina," December], and most of all for the excellent photos — it was well worth spending the night on the couch.

JOEL MORENO, BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS



Snoop prepares to make his speciality: spinach tartlets!

'N SYNC'S BLOCK AND TACKLE

Justin Timberlake "can honestly say" that he's never seen the penises of his bandmates Joey Fatone, Chris Kirkpatrick, Lance Bass and JC Chasez [Dear Superstar, December]? Come on now, kiddo. Some of your fans may be on the young side, but we're not naive. I'm not saying that Justin is dropping the soap when JC joins him in the shower, but after sharing hotel rooms in Europe, quick changes during concerts, living on cramped tour buses and, I hope, nights of drunken →



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The Polyphonic Spree introduce their new trombonist.

debauchery, I find it very difficult to believe that they haven't seen one another's goods. It's simply the laws of probability at work.

JOANNA GOLDSTEIN, NEW YORK

Good point. Certainly all the male *Blender* staffers have seen each other's . . . er, next letter!

I LOVE YOU

I fell in love with *Blender* because of your recent piece on the Polyphonic Spree, which is the best band in the world ["The Next Big Thing!", December]. Now please don't break my heart by not giving me some more of the Spree!

KATHRYN VALENTINE, FORT WORTH, TEXAS

"The Spree"? To those in the know, they're definitely "The 'Phonics."

NOT THAT MOBY PHOTO AGAIN!

I missed your recent article that included a gruesome photograph of Moby, naked, with a sock on his dick ["The Most Disastrous Albums of All Time," November]. I was very glad about this until I noticed that you repeated the offense by putting the damn photo on the January/February Letters page. Thanks a lot for ruining my appetite . . . for the whole next year! Why don't you just go ahead and print that photo again?

ISAIAH WEST, PORTLAND, OREGON

Your wish is our command.

BLENDER IS KING!

As a subscriber to about 15 different magazines, I thought I'd get my fiancé a subscription to one of his own, so we



Moby: "Sure, I need an X-Large."

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Jenelle Salazar and No Doubt's Tony Kanal



Kevin Baker and the late Layne Staley



★ WELCOME, SPRING! It's time to break out the flip-flops, grab the camera and spend a sun-filled day getting your picture taken with your favorite rock star, rapper or country crooner. But wait! Send us that photograph, and you could win big! If we like what we see, not only will we print your photo right here, but we'll also give you the one and only SONICblue Rio Sport S30S digital music player. It works on both PCs and Macs. Oh, yeah!

could share some quiet time together. Little did I realize that after reading just one issue, I would put *Blender* on top of my pile before it ever reaches his side of the bed. The articles are brief but full of tasty tidbits, unlike some other music mags — whose articles are long but leave me hungry for some real musical info. Thanks!

LISA BLANCK, WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA

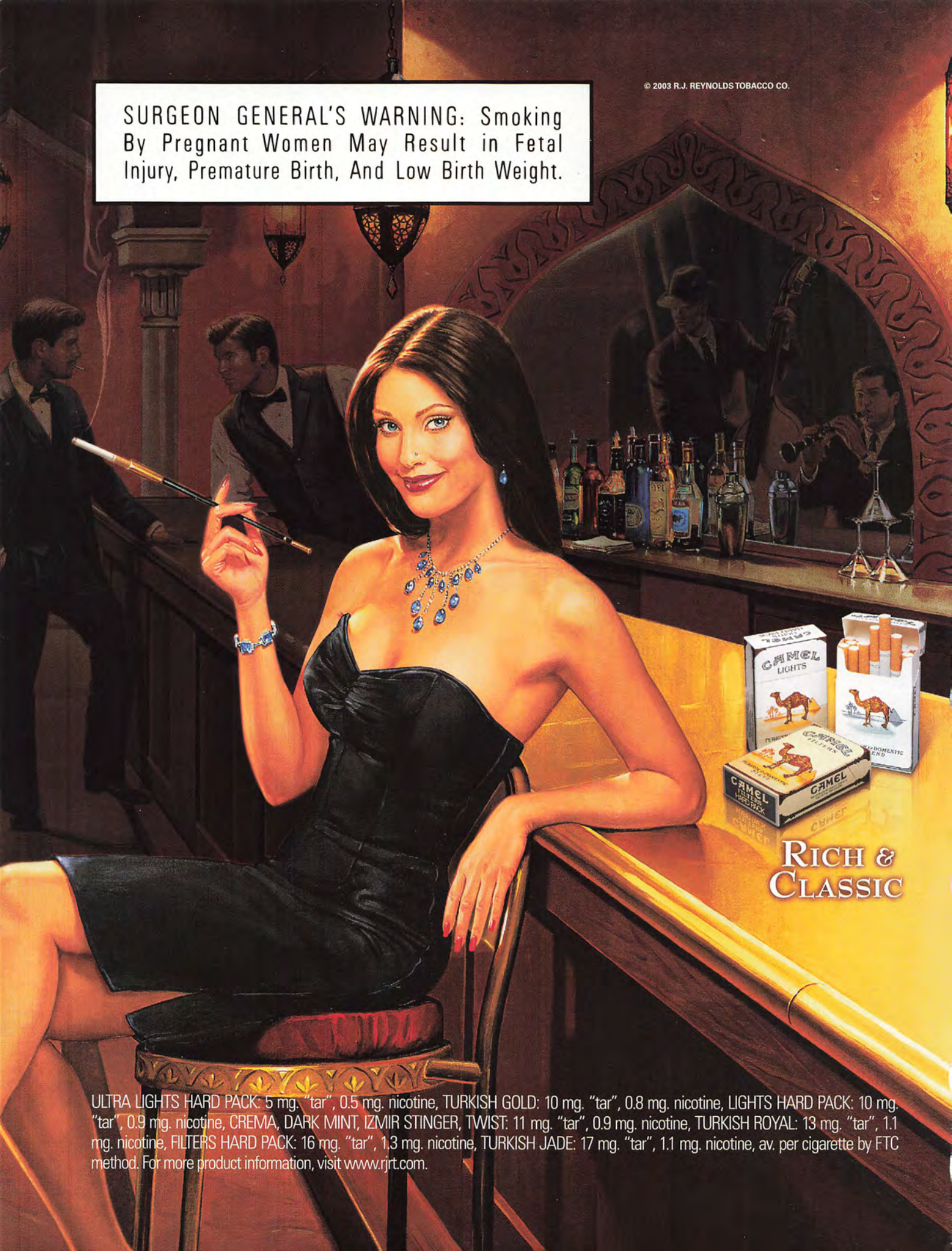
NICK CARTER IS EVERYWHERE!

Admit it, *Blender*: Nick Carter is one of your guilty pleasures! You've mentioned him a lot lately. I first noticed him a few months ago, and I was looking for him in your December issue. There he was, on page 38. So feel free to show the "Carter love" in subsequent issues. Oh, next time you see Nick, tell him I'll take him to the fucking Winn-Dixie →

A woman with long dark hair and blue eyes is the central figure. She is wearing a black strapless dress and a necklace with blue teardrop-shaped stones. She holds a lit cigarette in her right hand, with smoke rising from it. She is seated at a dark red table covered with a patterned cloth, upon which several diamonds are scattered. The background consists of dark blue draped curtains.

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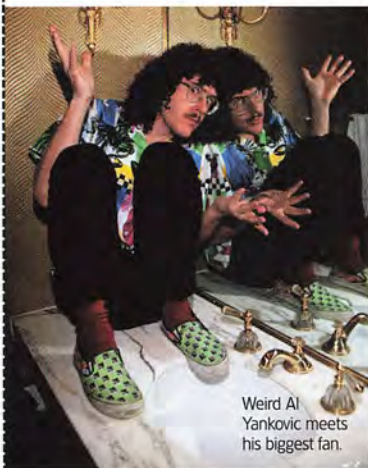
PLEASURE — TO — BURN



MELOW
TURKISH



EXOTIC & INDULGENT



Weird Al Yankovic meets his biggest fan.

and show him how much a quart of milk costs ["Who Does Nick Carter Think He Is?", November].

DEE MICHELLE, TAMPA, FLORIDA

I AM NUTS

What in the world is up with the list you guys recently came up with, naming the greatest geniuses in rock history ["The Top 50 Rock Geniuses of All Time," January/February]? Ralf Hütter — who? Bob Dylan — *bo-ring!* I've got four words for you: Weird Al Yankovic, fools!

JOHN ENGELS, ALBANY, NEW YORK

YOU NEED A PSYCHIATRIST

Mariah Carey recently told *Blender* that she didn't have a "traumatic nervous breakdown," she had an "emotional and physical breakdown" ["Why Is This Woman Smiling?", January/February]. What's the difference?

JAN FELDMAN, OJAI, CALIFORNIA

As a licensed psychiatrist, we're always getting people asking us, "What is the difference between a 'traumatic nervous breakdown' and an 'emotional and physical breakdown'?" We always reply, "Tell us about your mother. . . ."

THE BEU SISTERS? BAH!

Funny to hear the Beu Sisters' Christie Beu say, "Unlike the Spice Girls, who were manufactured, we were born with different personalities" ["Awww . . .," January/February]. They all sound and look the same to me. What's so different about being a young, blond singer looking for the limelight? Britney, Christina, Jessica, Shakira, Willa . . . the list is endless.

RORY CAROUTH, WEST CHESTER, PENNSYLVANIA

CRAZY-ASS POP STAR!

You should have a regular column called "Michael Jackson: One Crazy-Ass Muthafucka!" with all the screwy stuff

The Beu Sisters: All arguments should be settled this way.



Mr. Jackson is 44 years old.

he's been up to. Last month would have been the I'm-going-to-dangle-my-son-off-a-balcony-for-publicity story. This month would be the I-have-a-spider-bite-on-my-toe-so-I-can't-testify-in-court story. I bet you'll have material for next month, the month after that and the month after that. What do you say?

JOHN MATHIAS, TRENTON, NEW JERSEY

MISSY IS A SURVIVOR!

Your piece on Missy Elliott ["33 Things You Should Know About Missy Elliott," January/February] was amazing. Thank you, Clark Collis, for telling us so much about this artist, woman, fighter and survivor. You just got a new subscriber.

BETSEY LEARNED, NEW YORK



Why Missy Elliott shouldn't direct traffic

HAIRY

Thanks for your piece on System of a Down ["We're in World War III!," January/February]. *Blender* is the only magazine that can include fun-filled facts about Armenia and beard-growing all in one story. Sadly, my attempts to grow a beard like System bassist Shavo Odajian were unsuccessful. I followed your instructions, but still have nothing. Of course, it probably doesn't help that I'm a woman.

JENNIFER PENN, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

THANKS, DAD!

Ever since I first picked up *Blender*, I've been amazed by your editors' talent. Every article lets readers know what's important in music today. The Word! quotations from the stars and the news roundups are the best. Keep up the great work!

ALBERT GONZALEZ, COLTON, CALIFORNIA

SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH YOU

I'm a heterosexual 17-year-old, and I don't like Christina Aguilera's (or Xtina's) new look. Is something wrong with me?

TIMMY THORNTON, DIXON, ILLINOIS

PORN AND CURSE WORDS? YAY!

I just read the letter from the Church Lady-esque reader complaining that *Blender* consists of nothing but porn and curse words [Letters, December]. I have to ask her: What the fuck is up with that shit? *Blender*, your "porn and curse words" publication always keeps me coming back for more. Then again, so do porn and curse words all by themselves.

BRIAN EVANS, BOISE, IDAHO

Be sure to check out our upcoming feature: "The 25 Best Songs to F*ck To — As Recommended by Porn Stars!"

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In 1998, the Beverage Testing Institute of Chicago conducted a blind taste test of more than 40 vodkas. They awarded points based on smoothness, nose, and most importantly, taste. Of all the vodkas, Grey Goose® Vodka emerged victorious, receiving 96 points out of a possible 100.

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Score	Vodka	Country
96	GREY GOOSE® VODKA	FRANCE
94	Canadian Iceberg Vodka	Canada
93	Stolichnaya Gold Vodka	Russia
92	Staraya Moskva Premium	Russia
91	Van Hoo Vodka	Belgium
91	Stolichnaya Vodka	Russia
90	Tanqueray Sterling Vodka	England
90	Rain 1995 Harvest Vodka	USA
89	Ketel One Vodka	Holland
88	Wyborowa Vodka	Poland
87	Kremlyovskaya Vodka	Russia
86	Finlandia Vodka of Finland	Finland
86	Alps French Vodka	France
85	Sky Vodka	USA
82	Original Polish Vodka	Poland
82	Glenmore Special	USA
82	Fleischmann's Royal Vodka	USA
81	Mr. Boston Vodka	USA
80	Pole Star Vodka	Poland
80	Lukusowa Potato Vodka	Poland
80	Absolut Vodka	Sweden
78	Cardinal Vodka	Holland
78	Barton Vodka	USA
78	Barclay's Vodka	USA
78	Amazon Vodka	Brazil
76	Skol Vodka	USA
74	Smirnoff Vodka	USA
74	Crystal Palace Vodka	USA
74	Belvedere	Poland
72	Schenley	USA
69	Mr. Boston's Riva Vodka	USA

NOTE: THIS REPRESENTS A SAMPLING OF THE 40 VODKAS TESTED
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WHO'S RUNNING LONDON?

EXCLUSIVE: London's New Crime Wave



Gang wars peak. A city caught in the middle.

EXCLUSIVE: Thugs in Charge



by Brian Endicott
Tabloid Press

Chaos and fear have long been common in the dodgy areas of London, but now middle- and upper-class areas are feeling it as well. What is happening to our city? How did this lawlessness come about?

There's no simple answer to this. A large part of it has to do with the fact that the problem of organized crime was overlooked. Whilst it was, the gangs grew steadily and quickly and started expanding their empires throughout London.

Four different groups seem to be behind most of the goings-on, but to what extent remains unknown.

First and foremost, there is Charles "Charlie" Jolson and his boys, the Bethnal Green Mob. Jolson seems to be the name

The Yardies...specialize
in the sale of drugs,
guns and, consequently,
violence.

at the end of a lot of pointing fingers. Murder, drug trafficking, prostitution and extortion are just some of the activities London's biggest don is being attached to. When he's seen, he looks sharp. He's

A van burns on a busy London street. This sight is becoming all too common.



the kind of man who loves his power and loves to be noticed. If not for the crimes outlined in the case being built against him, he would appear to be a prominent member of society. He is the one at the top of the city's most-wanted list and is consistently linked to the most heinous of London's crimes. If there's one man authorities have their sights on, it's him. But, unfortunately for London, he's not alone. There's plenty of scum to follow.



The wrong end of an apparent Charlie Jolson tirade leaves a man lifeless on a warehouse floor.

Second, there are the 14K Triads. In recent years, they have broken out from Hong Kong to establish a stronghold in London. Recent reports put Shan Chu (Bobby) Lee in the driver's seat, but because of the order of their unit, so shrouded in secrecy, it makes it difficult to determine for certain. The Triads are an extremely loyal and relentless group who seem to execute with fearless precision. They leave nothing but corpses.

Moving on, there's the Collins Crew, headed by Nick Collins. Consider this band the Bethnal Green with a touch of class. Such is to say their getaway cars turn heads, even when not leaving a murder scene.

Last on the scum list are The Yardies, a group of Jamaicans in North London who specialize in the sale of drugs, guns and, consequently, violence. They're almost solely to blame for the spread of drugs out of the ghettos.

But another name that keeps popping up is Mark Hammond, a convicted bank robber. His affiliation at this point is in question, but CCTV have more than once pinned him to recent crimes, including arson, assault with a deadly weapon, carjacking and possibly murder. Hammond seems to be working alone, but, as of yet, nothing is certain. He is slippery, and although cameras have caught him, authorities haven't been close.

London's New Crime Wave



(Left) Mark Hammond, a convicted bank robber, has been eluding authorities since his recent release. (Below, left) The only known picture of Yasmin, London's finest assassin. (Below) Vigilante copper Frank Carter vows to get Charlie at any cost.



London is bracing itself,
waiting to see what's
next from an organized
crime circuit that
seems to have dug its
trenches deep, ready
for a long battle
to control the streets.



Surveillance cameras implicate Mark Hammond in at least two London crimes. His affiliation remains unclear, however.



EXCLUSIVE: (cont'd)



After the perfect man was cast to play Charlie Jolson, the creators of *The Getaway* used a revolutionary proprietary motion-capture technology to bring every one of his evil expressions to the screen. The result was the kind of villain you love to hate—and one who could turn nasty at the drop of a hat.



These are some of the stories that make up *The Getaway*, where you're either Mark Hammond, a retired thief whose past has caught up with him in a very ugly way—starting with your wife being killed and your son kidnapped. This is how you're pulled back into London's crime sector, doing jobs for England's worst. Or you're Frank Carter, a rogue cop who's hot on the trail of these thugs and more than hungry for a bust.

The Getaway is a crime story more than three years in the making. And it's the making of it that truly differentiates it from any game ever produced.

The creators of *The Getaway* sought to make something that walked the line between the worlds of gaming and cinema—a game that would actually rival an action movie and capture the hearts and minds of their respective audiences.

They wanted their game to take place in London and have a decidedly British feel. To achieve this, their inspiration came from British gangster films of the past several decades.

The first step was to re-create London, which was essential to the concept of *The Getaway* as a whole. The locations

for most video games are made up. Not with *The Getaway*. Forty square kilometers were reconstructed with painstaking detail. The product of this arduous process raises the level of realism ever obtained on a gaming platform. And given that much of *The Getaway* is driving action, as much attention was paid to the cars as to the locations. In fact, any car, bus or cab can be carjacked and driven for a high-speed getaway. So with 24 suicidal missions for you to undertake—from opposite sides of the law—as either Mark Hammond or Frank Carter, *The Getaway* brings London's underworld to life.

Next, unlike other games that just cast voices, *The Getaway* looked for the best actors for the roles, shot the scenes between the actors, then animated them using a proprietary motion-capture technology. This effect gives it part of its unique cinematic feel. Everybody in the

game, even the seemingly meaningless pedestrians, were cast, scanned and motion-captured.

But for as long as it took to create, the short answer is that *The Getaway* is quite possibly the most exciting and unique title that has ever come out for PlayStation 2. The most ambitious undertaking ever by a video game, *The Getaway*'s graphics, gameplay and, most of all, story set the bar for games to come. But is it a game? Or is it a movie? One thing is certain: "By challenging existing production methods, *The Getaway* shows that video games can become as boundless and culturally significant as films," says Brendan McNamara, director of *The Getaway*.
www.playstation.com

the Getaway

PlayStation.2



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Blood
Drug Reference
Strong Language
Strong Sexual Content
Violence



Welcome to London's underworld—where cops don't deal, criminals don't bargain and crime bosses don't negotiate. A world built upon a top-notch screenplay with plenty of twists and (hairpin) turns in the plot. Much hype has been made of this title, and it delivers in spades. Do you call it a movie? It's difficult to know, because simply calling it a game falls sadly short.

★ **BLENDER**

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★ JOE STRUMMER ★ PAMELA ANDERSON

★ 3 DOORS DOWN ➤➤

Axl Rose, a month before he would cause the Guns N' Roses tour to be canceled

What's Up With Axl Rose?

Did a couple of jokes at his expense really bring down the entire Guns N' Roses tour?



Guns N' Roses fans in Vancouver riot in November when the band fails to show.

AXL ROSE BLEW off Guns N' Roses' sold-out concert in Philadelphia — leading to the collapse of their tour — after a radio personality was rude about him on December 6, according to sources close to the singer.

Blender has discovered that Rose sulked and was depressed following the previous night's triumphant return to a sold-out Madison Square Garden in New York City.

After a bravura performance, a giddy Rose stayed up all night in his excitement to read positive reviews the next morning — and then tuned in to *The Howard Stern Show*.

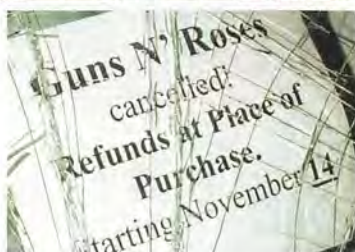
Stern's associate Doug Goodstein gave a thumbs-down to the MSG show, mocking the singer's braided hair, claiming that Rose needed oxygen between songs and was lip-syncing, and comparing him to Michael Jackson.

With a helicopter waiting on the rooftop of his hotel to take him on a brief 40-minute flight to Philadelphia for that night's show at the First Union Center, a dispirited Rose refused to budge.

Venue representatives boosted security to avoid a repeat of the riot that occurred when GN'R failed to turn up for their opening-night show in Vancouver on November 7.

Promoter Clear Channel and venue managers Comcast-Spectacor set a firm deadline of 10:45 P.M. for Rose to say whether or not he would show up to play. Rose's longtime manager, Doug Goldstein, reached at Rose's New York hotel room, glumly reported, "He's not coming."

At 11:15, the 15,000-strong audience was told the show was not going to happen "due to an illness



"It's one of the biggest disappointments of the year."

in the band." Fans were asked not to take their anger out on the staff or the facility. Some of them threw chairs and attacked the lighting, sound and video crews, but no arrests or injuries were reported.

"[The Guns N' Roses tour] probably will go down as one of the biggest disappointments of the year. Not just because the band didn't always show up, but because most of the audience didn't," says Gary Bongiovanni, the editor in chief of the concert business trade monthly *Pollstar*.

Attendance at other venues was underwhelming; according to figures reported to *Pollstar*, ticket sales for the tour's first 10 dates averaged 7,344 a night for arenas that hold between 15,000 and 20,000.

Rose has still not completed *Chinese Democracy*, the album he has been working on for nearly a decade. The troubled singer is reported to have spent millions of dollars working on 73 songs still in various stages of construction.

Blender has assembled a panel of experts to assist Rose with the next step to take to help his ailing career. **STEVE HOCHMAN**



What Should Axl Do Next?

By Rob Kemp

"His options are to leave the business and have a nice life if he can afford it, or try to get someone to believe in him again somehow — or, in a year, put the real GN'R back together. He should do some soul-searching and realize that it's about the fans and not about him."

DOC MCGHEE, THE HEAD OF DOC MCGHEE ENTERTAINMENT, MANAGER OF KISS, FORMER MANAGER OF MÖTLEY CRÜE AND BON JOVI



"If he wants to resume his career, he must be productive. His fate is in his hands — it doesn't appear that he's truly being victimized. And he's got to get that album out."

ALLAN MAYER OF SITRICK AND CO., A CRISIS-MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE, WHOSE CLIENTS HAVE INCLUDED TOMMY LEE AND R. KELLY

"The fact that he's falling apart indicates that he can't access the creative part of himself. He needs to relive his childhood trauma — that's the only way he can move on. Any treatment he has undergone hasn't worked."

DR. ARTHUR JANOV, JOHN LENNON'S FORMER THERAPIST AND THE ORIGINATOR OF PRIMAL-SCREAM THERAPY

"I would get him as strong a prescription to Xanax as I could, and then I would insist he go on MTV and make an extremely contrite public statement. I'd then suggest that he lose the heavy-metal Village People, unveil the classic lineup of Guns N' Roses and play free club and theater shows in Philadelphia and Vancouver."

STEVE MARTIN, THE HEAD OF NASTY LITTLE MAN, A MUSIC PUBLIC-RELATIONS COMPANY

"He seems to have a self-destructive, grandiose attitude that's very reflective of an addict — 'It's everybody's fault but mine.' He's acting like a toddler in a tantrum, victimizing others as he was formerly victimized as a child. But part of recovery is growing yourself up, taking on responsibility and behaving like an adult."

SUZANNE LOPEZ, "LIFE COACH" AND AUTHOR OF *GET SMART WITH YOUR HEART*

"I think that he should leave the music business and go to Africa for several years. He's gotta get some perspective —

so maybe he could become a witch doctor in some minute republic."

DAMON ALBARN, THE LEAD SINGER OF BLUR

"He needs to get his record out — if it's great, and there's some semblance of order in the subsequent touring, then a lot will be forgiven."

JOHN SCHER, A FORMER GUNS N' ROSES CONCERT PROMOTER



Axl Rose: "Thanks for all the advice — peace!"



No, Redman — we said you *do* rock.

Do You Rock? ★

Redman

Does the pro-marijuana hip-hop star rock?

What's your favorite classic-rock song?

I used to really rock that old Billy Joel and Boz Scaggs. Lemme see, what was that rock shit I used to pump... Who played 'Murder by Numbers'? The Police! Yeah, man, they definitely were rocking me.

Least rockin' city?

I don't really want to jeopardize anything. Just put down "What city scared the shit out of you?" instead. I tell you, it's that goddamned Seattle. I don't fuckin' know. I went up and rocked those motherfuckers before, and it was spooky. Real spooky.

Ever met Bono?

Bono? Who the hell is that?

Ever trashed a hotel room?

Oh, man, yes. We were straight coming in there and acting like the motherfuckers from *Jacob's Ladder*, we were so zoned.

Ever wrecked a car?

Not so much wrecked as tore up and put in the shop. I'm a skilled driver. These wrecks I had were, like, backing into a wall or something. Never hitting anybody or running into a house. Just my high-ass misjudging.

Ever get lucky on a plane?

Just half-and-half. I got brain on a plane!

Any hobbies?

I'm pretty much working all the time, but I do like to light fireworks — even when it's not the Fourth.

Got a stripper's pole in your studio?

We don't go for all that shit, man. Studio's for working. There are no strippers in here.

Are you drunk right now?

No — I'm in the studio.

Are you high right now?

Yeah, I'm real high — I'm in the studio!

SCOTT DESIMON



THE SMOKE HAS CLEARED TO REVEAL: REDMAN... ROCKS!

→ REDMAN'S NEW ALBUM IS DUE OUT IN MARCH.

News Roundup!

AXL ROSE was recently refused entry to a party hosted by celebrity photographer David LaChapelle in honor of his transsexual muse, Amanda Lepore. Rose's animal-pelt coat violated the antifur policy of the venue, New York nightclub Spa.

PINK sent her bodyguard to the hospital by biting him as he restrained her during a night out in Adelaide, Australia. The inebriated singer upset hotel staff by climbing on the bar and dancing provocatively. Her bodyguard climbed up to restrain her, and she bit his arm. "The guy yelped like a dog," one bystander noted.

Coldplay singer **CHRIS MARTIN** has reportedly been dumped by Gwyneth Paltrow, who is now dating Prince Nicholas of Greece.

Word!



"If Simon Cowell slated me the way he did the kids on *Pop Idol*, I'd wait for him after the show."

TOM JONES, ON THE AMERICAN IDOL JUDGE



Queen poster redux, 2002

Bottoms Up!

A fleet of bare-assed female cyclists re-create famous Queen photo to hawk XXX video game. Yay!



★ SEVENTEEN buxom, bare-butt bikers recently peeled out — and off — to re-create the poster that came with Queen's 1978 album, *Jazz*, which featured the hit double single "Bicycle Race"/"Fat Bottomed Girls."



Queen poster original, 1978

The gathering, which took place at the Crystal Palace athletic track in South London on December 2, marked the launch of the raunchy new PlayStation 2 video game BMX XXX. The R-rated game features topless BMX riders and a supporting cast of pimps, prostitutes and pink poodles in heat — and footage of real strippers.

Queen enjoyed a buoyant 2002 with the success of their theatrical hit, *We Will Rock You*, but what was their reaction to inspiring a whole new generation of twitching remote-control addicts?

"I don't even think they are aware of it," a spokesman for the band said. NICK DUERDEN

★ Pop Star Must-Have

WHEELS!

Be it skateboard, wheelchair, bicycle or golf cart, the latest pop-star must-have has gotta roll!



"Care for a ride?"



Avril Lavigne



Justin Timberlake



Madonna



Carson Daly

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TRUE 2 THE CODE
BAD 2 THE BONE

CRADLE 2 THE GRAVE

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PHOTOGRAPHY

MUSIC BY JOHN FRIZZELL AND DAMON "GREASE" BLACKMAN STORY BY JOHN O'BRIEN

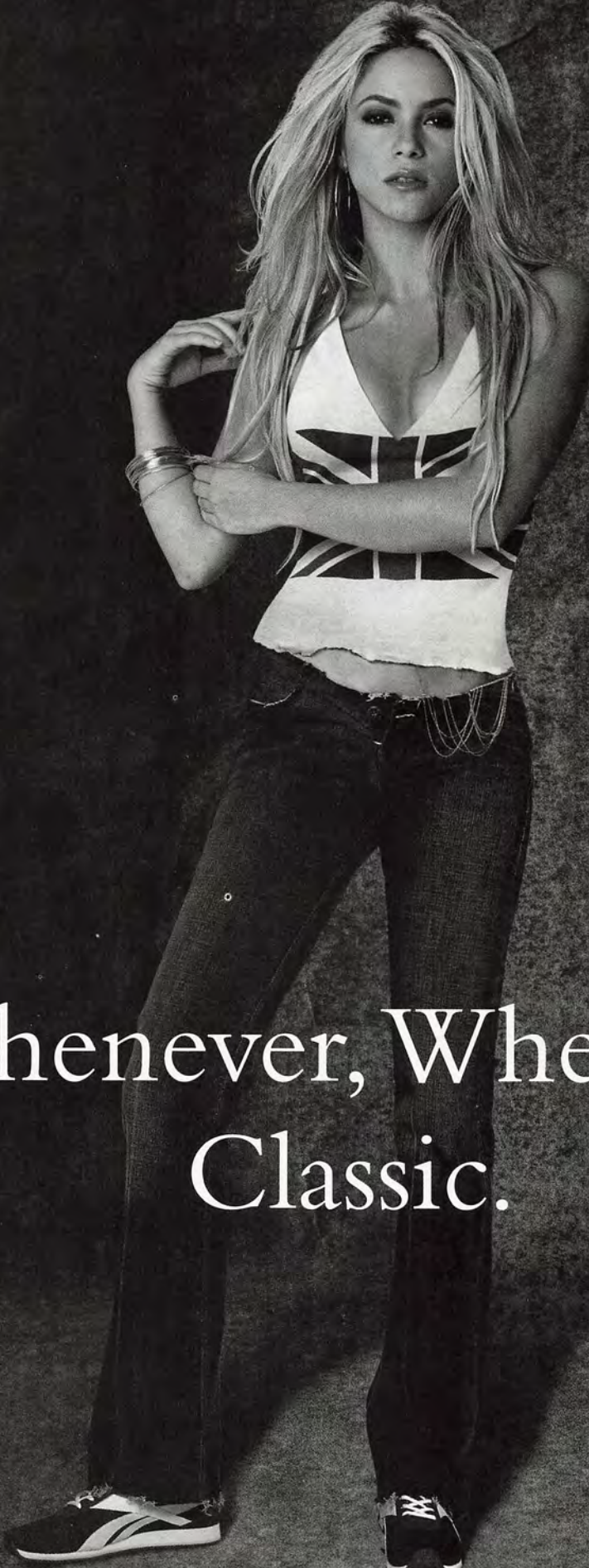
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FEBRUARY 28



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SHAKIRA is wearing the Reebok Classic Valiant

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The Next Big Thing!

MS. DYNAMITE

Britain's answer to Missy Elliott is ready to conquer America!

BY NICK DUERDEN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RANKIN

★ SHE HAS A problem with her image, and she thinks she sings like a cat — but for all that, Ms. Dynamite is still the U.K.'s finest hip-hop export in a generation. Her debut album, *A Little Deeper*, is very good indeed.

"That's nice of you to say," she begins, before explaining how, ever since she was just 13 years old, she has thought of herself as "thick, stupid and ugly."

"I guess you could say I grew up in unfortunate circumstances. I had a lot of brothers and sisters who died — five in total. One was stillborn, another suffered crib death and another had a hole in her lung. We never saw our dad, and then my mum got cancer. It started me thinking that I was no good somehow, and I just beat myself up." Despite all that, hers was a loving family and is still a big one: She has nine siblings, all of them healthy, all of them prodigiously musical.

MC'ing from age 17 in clubs and at raves, Ms. Dynamite was signed in late 2001, and things went supernova soon after. "I had a good year last year," she says with understatement, "and my confidence level is now at an all-time high."

It should be. The 21-year-old, born Niomi McLean-Daley in the northern London neighborhood of Camden, released *A Little Deeper* in the U.K. last year. A brilliantly fresh, startlingly original record, it combines the lyricism of Lauryn Hill with the playful hip-hop of Missy Elliott. The result is a critically approved big seller that scooped up many awards, including Britain's prestigious Mercury Music Prize. It'll be released in the U.S. this month.

"Obviously I want to be successful in America, but there is the danger that if it happens, I'll be very famous indeed, and I really, *really* don't want that!" She laughs and reconsiders. "But I try to focus on the positive side." [BLENDER]

>>> **OUT THIS MONTH**
A LITTLE DEEPER INTERSCOPE



Ms. Dynamite
and her invisible
lamppost

> A startlingly original record.





Kid Rock and Pam Anderson's idea of "clean living"

MEEOW!

Kid Rock hangs as Pam strips down for raunchy show

KID ROCK SQUEEZE Pamela Anderson recently raunched herself up another notch to perform with the burlesque revival troupe the Pussycat Dolls at the Henry Fonda Theatre in Los Angeles.

Anderson, pictured above backstage with her self-proclaimed American badass fiancé, saucily lip-synched April Stevens's '50s lounge standard "Teach Me Tiger" at the December 3 performance.

Other Pussycat Dolls included Christina Aguilera, Carmen Electra and Christina Applegate — who also left little to the imagination as they performed in fishnets, bras and panties.

The Pussycat Dolls show launched in 1995 as an opening act at Johnny Depp's Viper Room club in Hollywood and has now become a hot celebrity happening. Check pussycatdoll.com for info. CLARISSA LASKY



So that's what they mean by "show stopper."



Tell Us a Joke!

DAVE GROHL

WHY DO THE French never have two eggs for breakfast? Because one egg is un oeuf.

AS TOLD TO PHILIP OLIVER HOALS

News Roundup!

50 CENT, whose track "Wanksta" is on the *8 Mile* soundtrack, was arrested the morning of New Year's Eve after police found two loaded guns inside a car parked outside the Manhattan nightclub Copacabana. The weapons are believed to have belonged to the rapper and members of his entourage.

Former Sex Pistols singer **JOHN LYDON** knocked an actor dressed as Goofy to the ground while visiting Disneyland with his grandchildren. Theme-park staff alerted police, but no charges were brought. "He was in my way," the former Johnny Rotten explained.

Motörhead singer and renowned amphetamine fan **LEMMY KILMISTER** has revealed he sometimes has problems maintaining an erection. "Sometimes the bloody thing just sits there and looks up at you," he complained.

Word!



"I don't like it when it's dark. Get the lights on!"

P. DIDDY, UNNERVED BY A POWER OUTAGE AT HIS MTV EUROPE MUSIC AWARDS AFTER-PARTY



Ryan Adams's unfair advantage? Can't hit a man with glasses.



Jack White: "Try me."

New Rock Feud!

Hey, why are old friends Ryan Adams and Jack White at each other's throats?

☆ ONETIME ROCK PALS Ryan Adams and Jack White are locked in a bitter feud, with Adams having called White a "little girl" and a "fucking ponce."

The argument began when Adams performed the White Stripes' song "Dead Leaves and the Dirty Ground" with new lyrics, singing, "Meg White you do me all right/You do me anyway I want" and "Poor Jack White he can't get no sleep since Mr. Ryan he came around." White is said to have responded negatively to this barbed tribute, which enraged the notoriously thin-skinned Adams.

"I get to shop at 40 or 50 more stores for clothes than that guy does," the alt-country singer told the British press, referring to Jack White's signature red-and-white stage attire. "I don't fucking get it."

Adams also scorned White's appearance in the forthcoming Civil

War epic *Cold Mountain*, suggesting that he accepted the role only so he could hang out with leggy costar Nicole Kidman. Adams claimed that director Anthony Minghella had previously offered him the part, but said he opted to burnish his alt-country street cred by turning the role down.

"I didn't see acting anywhere on my job application to be a rock fucking star," he passionately explained. "Three lines in a two-and-a-half-hour film? I'd rather get a gun and blow my eyeball out."

"I'd rather get a gun and blow my eyeball out."



Adams once described the White Stripes on his Web site as "rock & roll's future" and said their music

made him want to "eat crack pipes and dance with the voodoo bones of the dead." He also said Meg White was "maybe the most beautiful woman I have ever seen."

Jack White declined to comment. STEVE LOWE



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BURNER +



➤ An updated Led Zeppelin with the arrogant swagger of the Verve.



The Music, from left: Phil Jordan, Stuart Coleman, Robert Harvey, Adam Nutter

The Next Big Thing!

THE MUSIC

British quartet casts aside marijuana-fueled paranoia in favor of heavy-duty rockin' — yeah!

BY NICK DUERDEN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICK ROCK

★ IT IS EARLY afternoon, somewhere in America. The Music's elfin frontman, Robert Harvey, has just awakened. "Is it morning yet?" is the first thing he says. The Music are currently on tour with the Vines, and their tour bus has just pulled up in a place called Grand Rapids. "Where's that?" he asks. "Idaho? Ohio? . . ."

OK, it's Michigan. But have a little sympathy, readers. Harvey is just 19. He has rarely been out of England before, and he's gradually discovering that America is, well, huge. "I was expecting a bunch of big buildings and big burgers," he says in his trademark mumble. "But, fair play, I've met loads of good people here. America has been a pleasant surprise."

The Music are a wall-of-sound rock quartet from Leeds: Harvey on vocals, Adam Nutter on guitar, Stuart Coleman on bass and Phil Jordan on drums. They're all between 19 and 21, and got together, Harvey says, only because "Leeds

was boring. Didn't even know if we were any good, really. We just wanted to escape."

His apathy is misleading, because musically the Music are formidable, and their self-titled debut nails listeners to the wall with its sonic dynamics — an updated Led Zeppelin with the arrogant swagger of the Verve.

How keen is the band to crack America? "Success? I can take it or leave it; it doesn't interest me," Harvey asserts. By now, he's looking genuinely miserable. And misery, it transpires, is a major factor in their sound: In 2001, Harvey had "the worst year of my life." Too much marijuana was making him paranoid, and then came September 11. "I became obsessed by it," he recalls. "It really got me down. I didn't want to get out of bed, and I couldn't be bothered to talk to anyone. Now I've stopped doing drugs, and I've spent a lot of this past year trying to rebuild myself."

First up on his rebuilding plan?

"I want to go bowling with the Vines and get pissed," he deadpans. "See ya." [BLENDER]

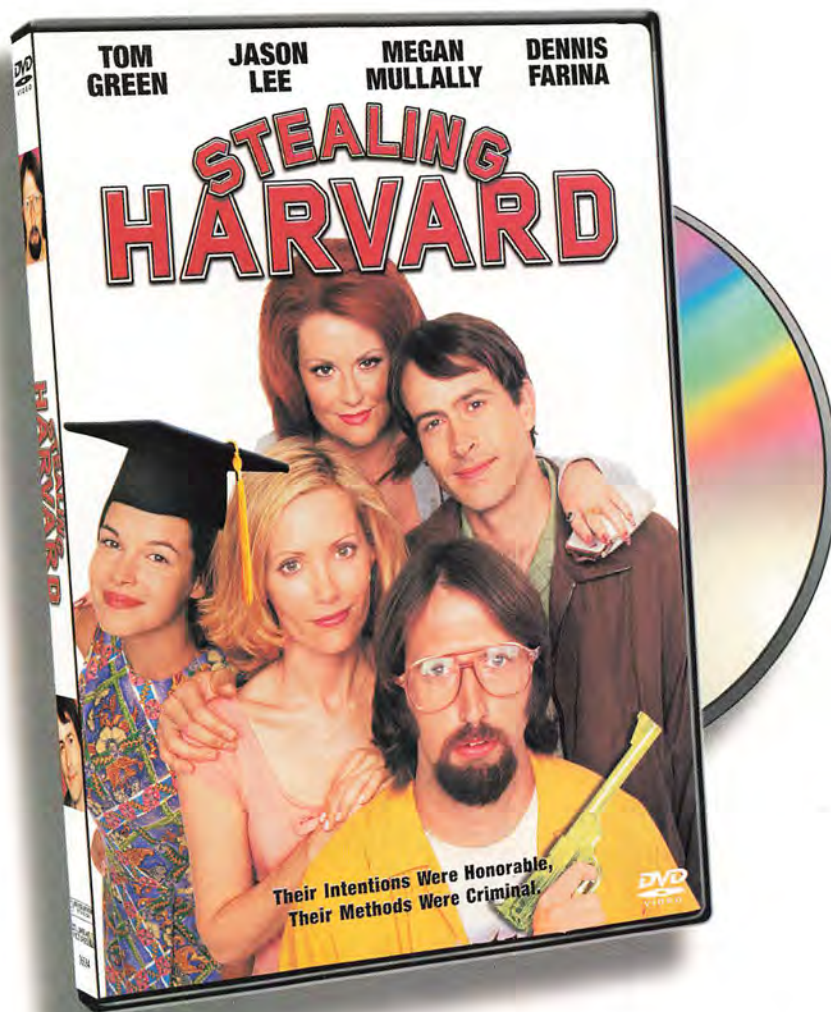
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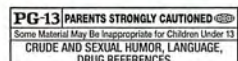


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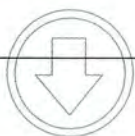


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Beyoncé puts to rest rumors that she can't sell out.

BEYONCÉ IS THE NEW BRITNEY

AND OTHER LATE-BREAKING DEVELOPMENTS



Justin and Britney making up

is the new

Justin and Britney breaking up

Michelob Ultra, the low-carbohydrate light beer for people who lead an active lifestyle

is the new

Gatorade, the high-fructose electrolyte elixir for people who lead an active lifestyle

"War, a great way to avenge your father's failures"

is the new

"War, what is it good for?"

P. Diddy confessing that Coldplay songs make him cry

is the new

Puff Daddy denying possession of an illegal weapon



Springtime water nose

is the new

Winter vomiting disease

My Big Fat Greek Wedding, Oscar nominee!

is the new

My Big Fat Greek Wedding, annoying chick flick that just will not die!



Porsche Cayenne

is the new

Lincoln Blackwood

Eminem's depressing childhood home failing to sell on eBay

is the new

Eminem's depressing young home life selling big in theaters



News Roundup!

Occult-friendly prog-metalers **TOOL** accidentally caused a fire in their dressing room in San Antonio recently. A candle the group had lit backstage at the Freeman Coliseum set nearby curtains on fire, and the room was soon engulfed in flames. Before being extinguished, the blaze caused several thousand dollars' worth of damage.

TOMMY LEE has admitted to an abiding passion for trees. "I can look at any tree and name it," he says.

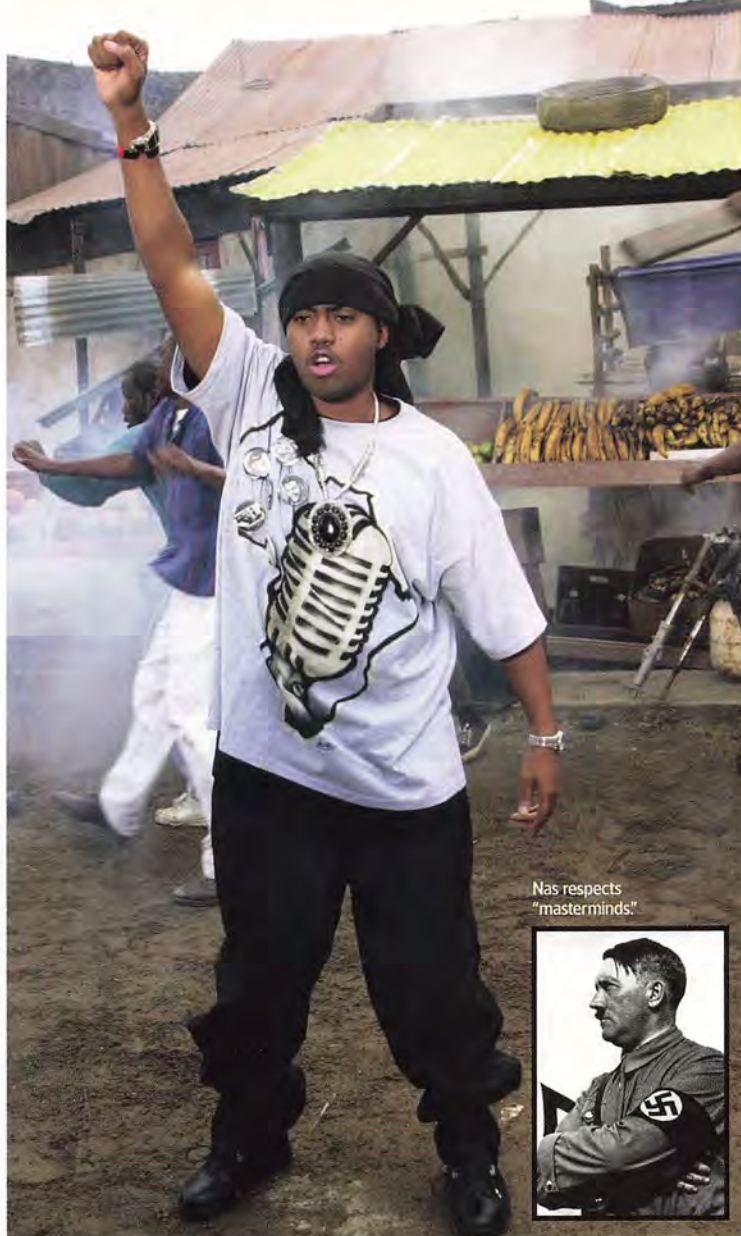
The Los Angeles policeman who arrested **GEORGE MICHAEL** for indecent exposure is suing the singer for \$10 million, charging slander. Marcelo Rodriguez's case claims that Michael's video for "Outside," which spoofed the 1998 incident, caused him so much "emotional and physical distress" that he required medical attention.

Word!



"I was playing in the Midwest, and I looked down and saw what I can only describe as dancing accountants. I was horrified."

DAVID GRAY



Nas respects "masterminds."



Nas ♥ Hitler?

Multiplatinum-selling rap star Nas has declared that he looks up to Adolf Hitler

★ **NAS HAS CAUSED** a storm of controversy by suggesting that he admires Adolf Hitler. The hip-hop star's comments came while he was promoting his new album, *God's Son*, and the track "Masterminds" in particular.

"It's simple," the rapper said. "It's telling you a little bit about myself. And it's telling you about motherfuckers I look up to and, um, masterminds — Genghis Khan, Hitler, Nat Turner, J. Edgar Hoover, Huey Newton, all different types of motherfuckers."

A spokesman for Nas denied that the rapper looks up to Hitler: "Oh, that's stupid. [It's] totally taken out of context. Nas never said he admired Hitler."

The comments first appeared on hip-hop news Web site SOHH.com. Journalist and SOHH president Felicia Palmer condemned Nas's comments and publicists at his record label, Sony.

"Talk to your artists. Train your artists," she said. "Stop speaking out of turn. The question still remains: How do you look up to Hitler?"

The following day, Nas (born Nasir bin Olu Dara Jones) attempted to clarify his position.

"I hate Hitler, because he hated my people," he said. "But as an enemy, if you don't respect a smart, evil genius, you are going down." CLARISSA LASKY



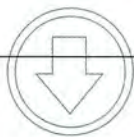
Cross-dressing FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover



Las Vegas, Spring 2003

10:33 PM





"YOU RELEASED THE FURY!"



Swedish king of neoclassical guitar Yngwie Malmsteen recently freaked out aboard a plane. But why, for heaven's sake?



In early December, Malmsteen is en route to Tokyo, where he remains popular. He allegedly utters a homophobic slur to his entourage.



A female passenger, riled by the comment, dumps a glass of water on the portly guitarist.



A member of Malmsteen's group records him as he rants, "I paid for a first-class ticket! I don't need that fucking cunt coming up to me and pulling that shit! See you in Tokyo, bitch!"



The 39-year-old Malmsteen then threatens the woman with the words "You released the fucking fury! You released the fucking fury! I'll kill that motherfucker! I'll kill that motherfucker! I'll kill that motherfucker. You fat fuck!" Malmsteen could not be reached for comment, and no charges had been brought as of press time. **ROB KEMP**

→ **HEAR THE RANT AT BLABBERMOUTH.NET/YNGWIE_TOKYO_FLIGHT.MP3.**

News Roundup!

BRITNEY SPEARS has met with French dance duo **DAFT PUNK** and British producer **WILLIAM ORBIT** about a possible collaboration in 2003. According to Spears, her new material will be "a little bit more rock, hip-hop."

Singer Peter Garrett has left Australian eco-political rockers **MIDNIGHT OIL** to devote himself full-time to environmental causes.

MICHELLE BRANCH regularly receives white roses from collaborator **CARLOS SANTANA** and his wife. The couple send Branch a bouquet to mark every time she and Santana perform together.

PHIL COLLINS has disappointed fans by deciding to stop touring, following doctors' warnings that he is at risk of going completely deaf in his left ear. However, Collins has not ruled out performing the occasional "unplugged" show in front of smaller audiences.

Word!



"I shouldn't be doing this."

ENRIQUE IGLESIAS, UPON BEING CAUGHT MAKING OUT WITH A WOMAN WHO WAS NOT ANNA KOURNIKOVA

★ Where Are They Now? ★

Life After Rock



Neal Smith

the Alice Cooper Group

THEN!

Drummer, 1968-1975

NOW!

Luxury real-estate broker, Westport, Connecticut

★ "WE HAD A great amount of fun in the Alice Cooper Group. We were like five of the best friends in the world. I like to say it was sex, a lot of beer, a little bit of drugs — and rock & roll.

"We were either going to wind up starving and become garage mechanics, or we were going to make this work, because we were so dedicated and focused. The pieces of the puzzle finally came together: Out of our eight albums, five went platinum.

"In April 1973, *Billion Dollar Babies* was the number 1 album in the trade magazines *Cashbox*, *Record World* and *Billboard* at the same time. We were the biggest band in the world. To this day I still get chills thinking about how cool that was.

"In 1974, we decided to take a year off to refocus and recharge our batteries, and it just didn't come

back together as a group, unfortunately. There were a lot of things. [Guitarist] Glen [Buxton] had health problems. We were a bit tired out, too. It was hard.

"Unfortunately, Glen passed away in '97 of pneumonia [after years of deteriorating health brought on by excessive smoking, drinking and heroin use].

"I see Alice once or twice a year. The only thing I hate about Alice is that he got me into golf. It's totally frustrating. It's the only thing Alice can kick my ass at.

"By *School's Out*, we were all pretty rich. Our accountants were very savvy and we had a couple of investments. One was a big condominium complex. I bought a home in Arizona.

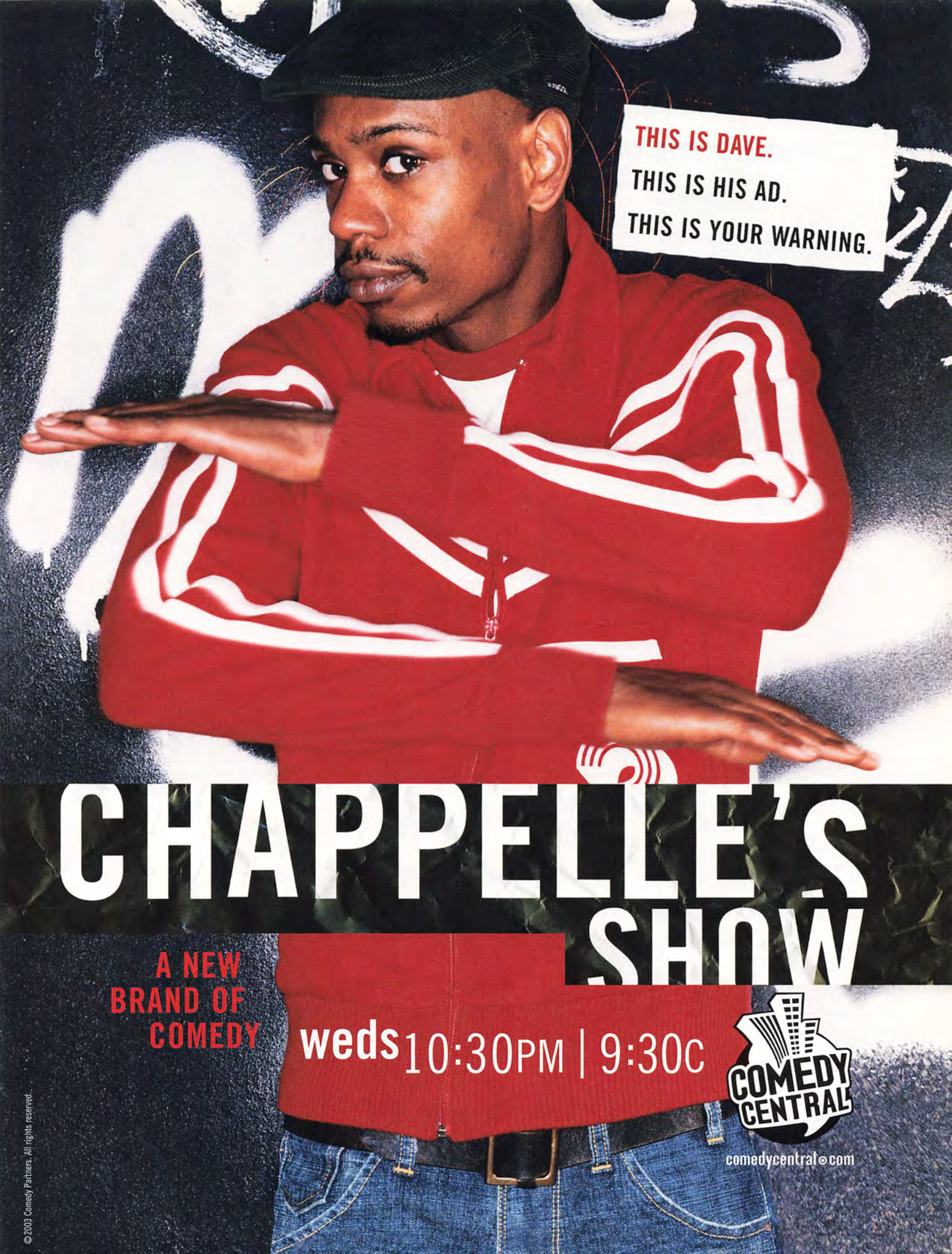
"I took a real-estate course in Connecticut. A friend who owned a real-estate company had a desk opening. This was about 1985. Within the first couple weeks of doing that, I sold a house.

"It was sex, beer and a bit of drugs."



"Selling a house is work, and it is gratifying, because you're helping someone.

"The outrageousness of Alice Cooper has a magnetism for people. But as long as it doesn't detract from my profession, it's OK. And it never has." **AS TOLD TO JON REGARDIE**



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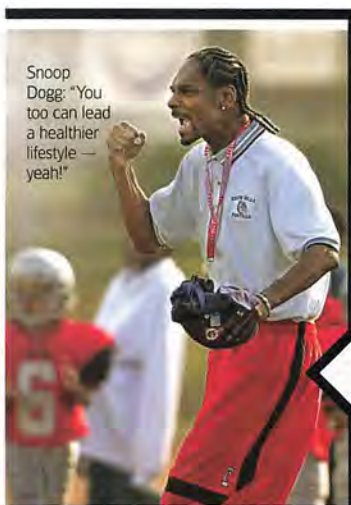
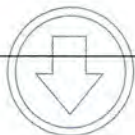
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Snoop Dogg: "You too can lead a healthier lifestyle — yeah!"

WEED WHACKERS!

Hip-hop's big guns stub out their true love — marijuana!

SNOOP DOGG AND Busta Rhymes are leading the way in a new hip-hop trend by quitting marijuana.

Dogg announced last fall that he would no longer smoke "the chronic." The rapper has celebrated marijuana throughout his decade-long career in tracks such as 1993's "Gin and Juice" and 2000's "Hennessy N Buddah."

The rapper-turned-porn entrepreneur, who was fined in 2002 for possession of the drug, says he quit smoking in order to provide a good example to his children. He also now coaches his 8-year-old son Corde's football team.

Rhymes told *Blender* that he's taking a break from marijuana, which he has smoked since he was 12.

Dr. Nadia Solowij of the University of New South Wales in Australia, author of a study of marijuana's effects on frequent long-term smokers, thinks the stars' quitting the drug is a good trend.

"[Marijuana] affects all aspects of short-term memory function," she says, "including learning, storage, recall and recognition of information."

Other studies indicate that marijuana acts as a depressant, can cause impotence and reduces a man's sperm count. Pot can also raise estrogen levels, causing men to grow enlarged breasts.

But pro-marijuana rapper Nelly has hit back. He said he has no intention of giving up the good herb — because "I remember everything I'm supposed to." DAVID G. KATZ



"Hey, pothead!"



"I remember everything."

News Roundup!

MOBY has asked the three men who attacked him recently to explain their actions. The techno star was punched and sprayed with Mace as he signed autographs outside Boston's Paradise Club on December 12. On his Web site, he wrote to his assailants: "You could anonymously sign on to the boards and describe the attack from your perspective. I'm honestly very curious."

A Pennsylvania man has been sentenced to three years in federal prison for impersonating **WILL SMITH**. The man, Carlos Lomax, had charged \$33,000 using credit cards in Smith's name.

In a recent online poll of 4,187 people, Yahoo! Auto revealed that **NELLY**'s "Hot in Herre" was voted the best song to listen to while driving.

A federal judge has refused to preliminarily enjoin **JENNIFER LOPEZ**'s use of the fragrance name *Glow* by J.Lo. She was sued by *Glow Industries*, which markets a different perfume.

Word!



"It's a lesson in letting go."

NIKKI SIXX, MÖTLEY CRÜE MEMBER TURNED BACKSTREET BOY SONGWRITER

★ In the Studio



Donald Fagen (left) and Walter Becker of Steely Dan

"Give This Girl a Go"

The sexy Christina Aguilera cover of *Blender* has excited Steely Dan, and it's helping them finish their new album

★ "IF I GO THROUGH Scientology auditing," jokes Steely Dan's Walter Becker, "I'm not gonna need to wear glasses anymore."

The puckish 52-year-old guitarist is referring to the religion's promise of a defect-free existence. His outburst is prompted by the fact that the studio where he's mixing his band's untitled ninth album is just a few doors from the New York office of the Tom Cruise-endorsed faith.

"Since we've been here," says Donald Fagen, the Dan's laconic, 55-year-old vocalist-keyboardist, "we haven't had the trouble with thetans [Scientology's term for the souls of murdered aliens that infest non-adherents] that we do elsewhere."

The absence of deceased extraterrestrials aside, Steely Dan's new

CD is a groove-based showcase for Becker and Fagen's sardonic viewpoint, similar to their previous CD, *Two Against Nature*, which won the 2000 Album of the Year Grammy.

While finishing up the new album and preparing for a tour, the pair attend jazz gigs and, although they generally disdain television, admit to a fondness for HBO's *Curb Your Enthusiasm* ("It falls into the category I call 'Things that make me embarrassed to be Jewish,'" Fagen groans) and for *Blender* — especially the December 2002 issue, with Christina Aguilera on the cover.

"I might want to give this Christina Aguilera girl a go if I had the opportunity," Becker jokes, eyeing the cover. "I don't think I'd pass that up." **ROB KEMP**

ALSO IN THE STUDIO



Metallica: On second thought, this is your father's rock & roll.

Reigning R&B empress **MARY J. BLIGE** is recording her sixth album with onetime mentor P. Diddy at Circle House in Miami and at Daddy's House in New York. No release date is set. . . .

METALLICA are in a Bay Area studio recording their first album since 1998's multiplatinum covers record, *Garage Inc.* Longtime producer Bob Rock has contributed bass to the album, which is due in mid-June. . . .

Rap-rockers **THE BLOOD-HOUND GANG** are recording a follow-up to 2000's *Hooray for Boobies* at Studio Z in Orlando, Florida, and at frontman Jimmy Pop's studio outside Philadelphia. . . .

Movie star, Snoop Dogg protégé and 15-year-old rapper (formerly Lil') **BOW WOW** is recording the sequel to 2001's platinum-plus *Doggystyle*. Overproducers the Neptunes are manning the boards at various studios. . . .

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★ What's in Your Bag?



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SASHA & DIGWEED

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Sasha: "This is a record that has been completely sampled. You think, 'Aw, fucking hell, these Italian producers are amazing.' Then you find out they ripped everything off these old classic disco records."



SLAM "POSITIVE EDUCATION," JOSH WINK REMIX

Digweed: "These guys are from Scotland. It's a classic within the dance community. You play this when you're closing down the night. It is a tingly moment."



SEÑOR COCONUT Y SU CONJUNTO EL BAILE ALEMAN

Sasha: "This is from Chile. They made versions of Kraftwerk songs in a mambo style. It's absolutely hilarious. The cover is just genius — terrific novelty value."



YOTHU YINDI "TREATY" 12-INCH

Digweed: "It's from '92, from Australia. They're Aborigines. It has such a unique feel to it, with the didgeridoos and those kind of effects. As a club record it works really well." **JON REGARDIE**

News Roundup!

The middle brother of blond-bopping teen sensation Hanson, 19-year-old singer **TAYLOR HANSON**, has become a father. His 18-year-old wife, Natalie, gave birth to Jordan Ezra late last year. "Life and art are all about these moments," Hanson said.

Jean-Claude Van Damme has claimed credit for the pertness of **KYLIE MINOGUE**'s backside. The pair costarred in the 1994 action film *Street Fighter*, and during filming the Australian singer was apparently so impressed with the Belgian muscleman's shapely buttocks that she adopted his unlikely regimen: ballet. "I got my buttocks so tight, I could crack walnuts with them," Van Damme said.

Duran Duran keyboard player **NICK RHODES** is reportedly enamored of the tofu-based meat substitute Quorn.

Word!



"I haven't smoked pot in years. I might have a few teaspoons of wine, but I'm out of the game after that."

OUTKAST'S ANDRE 3000, ON HIS SUBSTANCE INTAKE



Eminem leads hip-hop's attack on Hollywood: "We're coming for you, Clooney!"

Hip-Hop Hollywood

Eminem's \$100 million assault at the box office has changed moviemaking forever!

★ **EMINEM'S HUGE \$100-million-grossing box-office splash with 8 Mile is poised to make hip-hop the new face of Hollywood.**

"The whole urban culture is hitting the film business just like it did the fashion industry a few years ago," asserts Hollywood agent John Fogelman, whose clients include Kevin Spacey and Chloë Sevigny. "Everybody is trying to learn from [8 Mile] and do something different."

Along with the success of *Exit Wounds*, starring DMX, and Ice Cube's *Barbershop*, hip-hop stars appear ready to escape the "black movie" ghetto.

Among the potential new rap superstars are Master P (in the Harrison Ford action comedy *Hollywood Homicide*), Kurupt (in the James Ellroy cop saga *Dark Blue*) and Outkast's Dre (in *Love Hater*). Even the newly urban Christina Aguilera is said to have been

inspired by *8 Mile* and is considering cowriting her own thinly veiled biopic.

For the rappers themselves, an acting sideline makes good business sense during the slump in music sales. Both industries are excited by the potential for "synergy" between related products.

"If anybody knew that Eminem was going to bring in [so many] people," Fogelman says, "he would have probably been paid eight times what he got."

Love Hater director Morgan J. Freeman admits using *8 Mile* as a template but adds, "We're going one step further — the movie will have the same title as Dre's solo album and single."

Last year's *Halloween: Resurrection* was reshot to boost Busta Rhymes's screen time after test audiences decided he was the movie's major asset. **STEVE LOWE**



Digital J.Lo redefines whipped for Digital Ben. Hi-ya!

JEN SAVES BEN

J.Lo as you've never seen her before — that's right, pixelated!

➤➤ A NEW VIDEO GAME featuring Jennifer Lopez rescuing her soon-to-be better half, Ben Affleck, from imminent doom was commissioned by filmmaker and Affleck pal Kevin Smith.

In the game, *Jen Saves Ben*, Lopez battles an evil robot fashioned after Matt Damon and a laser gun—brandishing facsimile of Smith.

Smith developed a single copy of the game and gave it to the couple as a thank-you for appearing in his upcoming film, *Jersey Girl*. **CHUCK DAVIS**



"I win."



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THE YEAR

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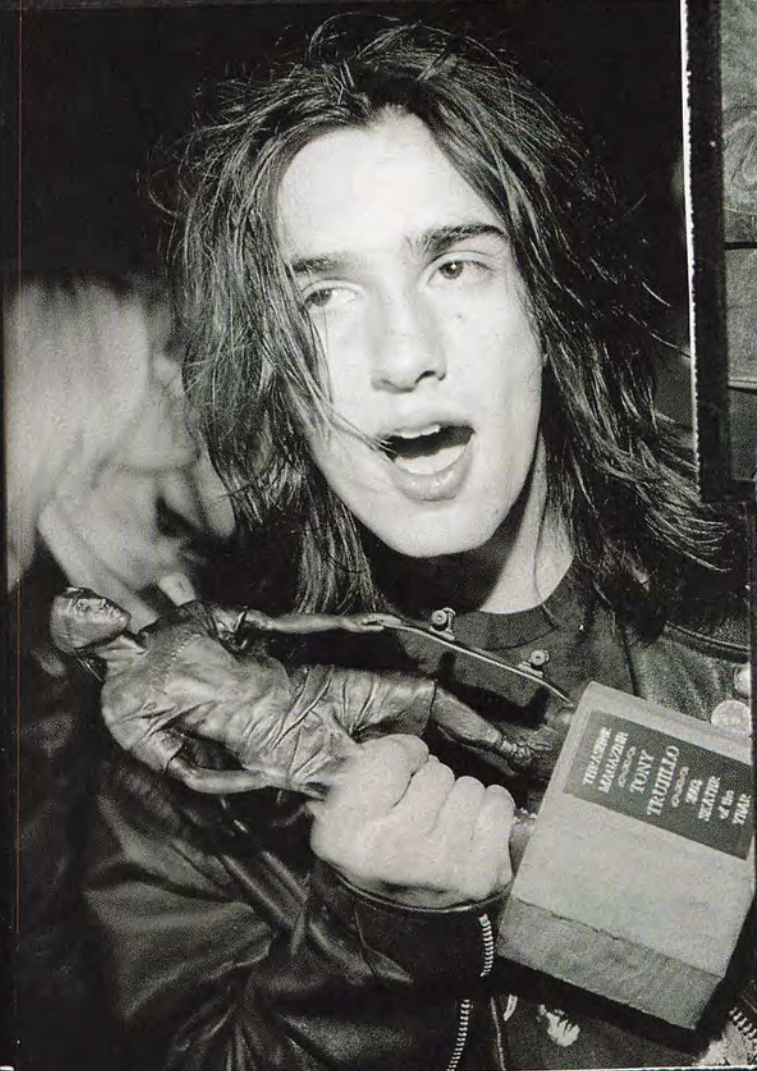
TONY TRUJILLO SIGNATURE SHOE

TNT



KODAK 5052 T1MX

36



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SKATER OF THE YEAR
TONY TRUJILLO

35A

SKATER OF THE YEAR
TONY TRUJILLO

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Useful Tips From the Stars!

DON'T TRY THIS
AT HOME!

HOW TO ...

Wrestle an Alligator with
3 Doors Down

Before neogrunge foursome 3 Doors Down sold 6 million albums, they faced the day-to-day pressures of life in Escatawpa, Mississippi — namely, taming rampant alligators! Bassist Todd Harrell reveals how to humble your very own prehistoric reptile. . . .

BY PAT KEARNEY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSTIN STEPHENS

1 Get 'Em!

"A couple of summers ago, Brad [Arnold, singer and drummer] and I tried to catch this 14-footer, and it just about killed us. We were in a boat, and we lassooed the gator's neck with a rope, hoping to drag it to shore.

"Well, he dived down underwater and almost took our boat along with him. Luckily, we got to shore and tied the rope to my 4x4 truck and pulled that gator right out of the water."

2 Blind 'Em!

"You need two guys, duct tape, a flashlight and quick reflexes. One guy shines the flashlight in the gator's eyes to blind him temporarily while the other guy gets close. When that light hits those eyes, they glow bright, bright red. If you're far away from the gator, you can learn to size him up quickly by how big his eyeballs are."

3 Wrap 'Em!

"Once you jump on the gator, the first thing you have to do is wrap its mouth with duct tape so it doesn't tear you up — not too much tape, though, because you have to get it off later.

"One time I grabbed the tail by mistake, and that ol' gator whipped around so fast he bit Brad's hand before I knew what happened. I mean, Brad was OK — he didn't need stitches or anything. His hand was just a little marked up, that's all."

4 Free 'Em!

"After its mouth is duct-taped, you can get it under control — however you need to — and then you and the person with you can pick it up and bring it back where it belongs. When you get near the water, you have to peel the tape off the mouth and get out of there really fast.

"I know catchin' gators sounds crazy, but here in the South, it's just something you learn as a kid. You know who's really crazy? That Crocodile Hunter guy on TV, Steve Irwin. That guy needs a wheelbarrow to carry those big balls of his. Those crocs he messes with are straight-up mean!"

Note: This alligator was not harmed during the taking of this photo — it was harmed long ago, when it was stuffed!

3 DOORS DOWN'S
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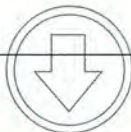
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"SILLY"?

Then why has Paul McCartney complained about his Beatles songwriting credits for years?

SIR PAUL MCCARTNEY recently dismissed his dispute with Yoko Ono over reversing the Lennon-McCartney songwriting credits on some Beatles songs as "rather silly." But *Blender* has learned that he has been eager to change the credits for years.

"The truth is that this is much ado about nothing," he said, "and there is no need for anybody to get their knickers in a twist."

But according to a source close to McCartney, the bassist-singer had been frustrated for many years that his late former writing partner was getting the lion's share of songwriting credits for compositions that McCartney either dominated or wrote exclusively. "I feel I've been confined to second-class status," McCartney allegedly complained.

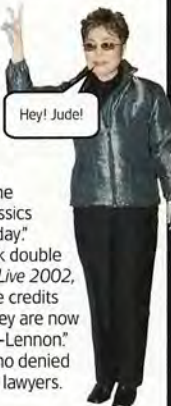
McCartney first spoke of being unhappy about playing second fiddle to Lennon five years ago in *Paul McCartney: Many Years From Now*, a 1998 authorized biography by Barry Miles. Three years earlier, McCartney had approached Ono, Lennon's widow, about changing the credits of certain songs to recognize the primary writer.

Ono replied with an adamant no, even for the McCartney-penned classics "Hey Jude" and "Yesterday."

On his new 35-track double album, *Back in the U.S. Live 2002*, McCartney reversed the credits on 19 Beatles songs; they are now credited to "McCartney-Lennon."

A spokesman for Ono denied that she was consulting lawyers.

NICK DUERDEN



"No need to get your knickers in a twist."



Obits

HADDA BROOKS
86, November 21, in Los Angeles, of heart disease. R&B pioneer nicknamed "Queen of the Boogie." Her 1945 hit "Swingin' the Boogie" established Brooks as a pianist, but she also sang in many films, and in 1951 became the first African-American woman to host a weekly variety TV show, *The Hadda Brooks Show*, which aired locally in Los Angeles.

ZAL YANOVSKY
57, December 13, in Kingston, Ontario, of a heart attack. Guitarist who helped form '60s jug-band rock group the Lovin' Spoonful, who had several Top 10 hits, including the chart-topping "Summer in the City" in 1966.

MARY HANSEN
36, December 9, in London, after being struck by a car while riding her bicycle. Keyboardist and vocalist for Stereolab. The Australia native joined the retro-pop alternative group in 1992.



Joe Strummer (far left) and the Clash backstage, 1982

Joe Strummer 1952-2002

The 50-year-old ex-Clash man died of a heart attack in his Somerset, England, home on December 22

★ THE DEATH OF Joe Strummer robs rock & roll of a lively thinker, an unrepentant idealist and a man whose saving grace was his self-deprecating sense of humor.

As singer and principal spokesman for the Clash, Strummer was punk rock's most avowedly political rebel. Yet he never forgot that the stance he took was riddled with contradictions, and his abiding honesty compelled him to admit it.



Joe Strummer: Sincerity and drive

Born John Mellor, son of a British diplomat, he renounced his respectable background and embraced radical socialism. The London punk explosion of 1976 was ideal for his passionate, ranting style and rudimentary guitar skills. Renamed Joe Strummer, he led the Clash from local rivalry with the Sex Pistols to global, stadium-conquering status. Indeed, this writer's fondest memory is of Strummer backstage at the Clash's tremendous Shea Stadium shows in New York in 1982 — typical of their "people's band" stance, he was smuggling fans inside by disguising them in security guards' jackets.

Though his group is revered, Strummer's saloon-bar Marxism is forgotten, displaced nowadays by rock bands' preference for any worthy cause their demographic endorses. But his warmth, sincerity and drive — musically compressed into that uniquely indecipherable yelp — will live forever within the white heat of the Clash's greatest songs. PAUL DU NOYER

JOE STRUMMER His greatest CDs



THE CLASH
EPIC, 1977

★★★★★

A ferocious debut dominated by Strummer's man-the-barricades yowling. The definitive punk album, one that hints at a bright future.



GIVE 'EM ENOUGH ROPE
EPIC, 1978

★★★★

Maligned at first thanks to glossy production, *Rope* offers classics "Tommy Gun" and "Safe European Home."



LONDON CALLING
EPIC, 1979

★★★★★

The Clash immersed themselves in Americana to produce one of the best rock & roll albums ever made. A masterpiece.

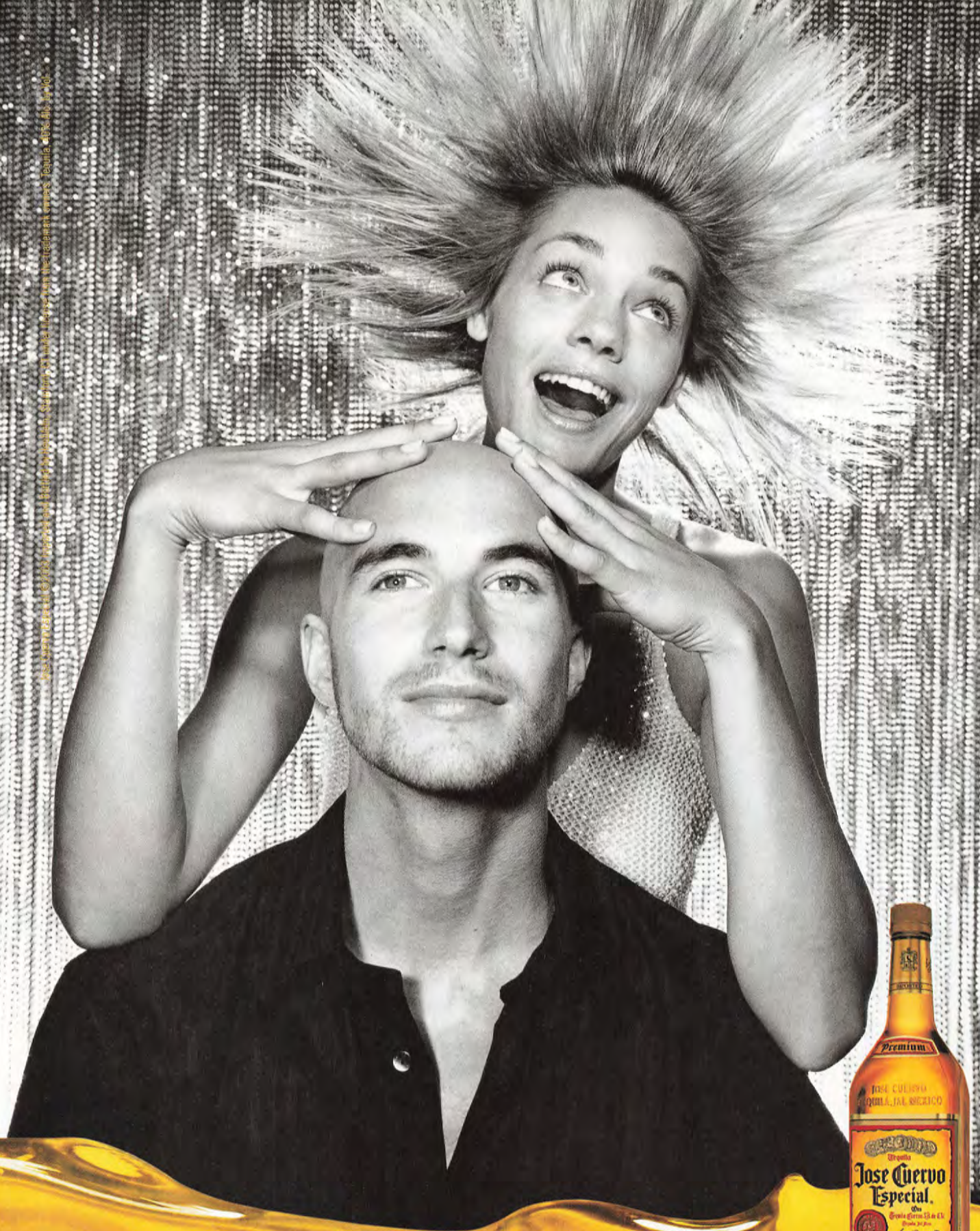


SANDINISTA!
EPIC, 1980

★★★★

A sprawling triple album. Probably the only LP to champion punk, Motown, country, reggae and rap, often at the same time. CLARK COLLIS

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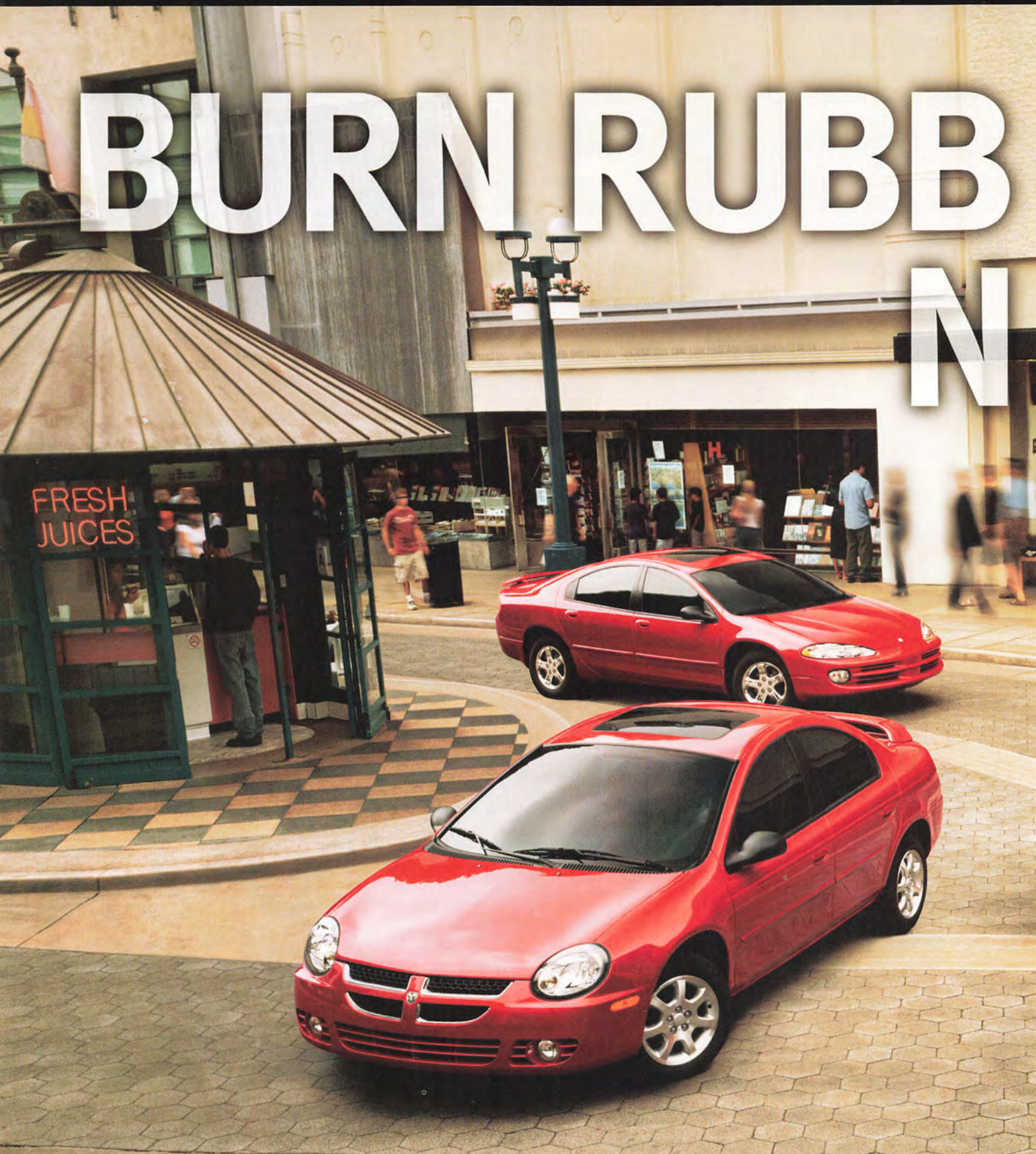
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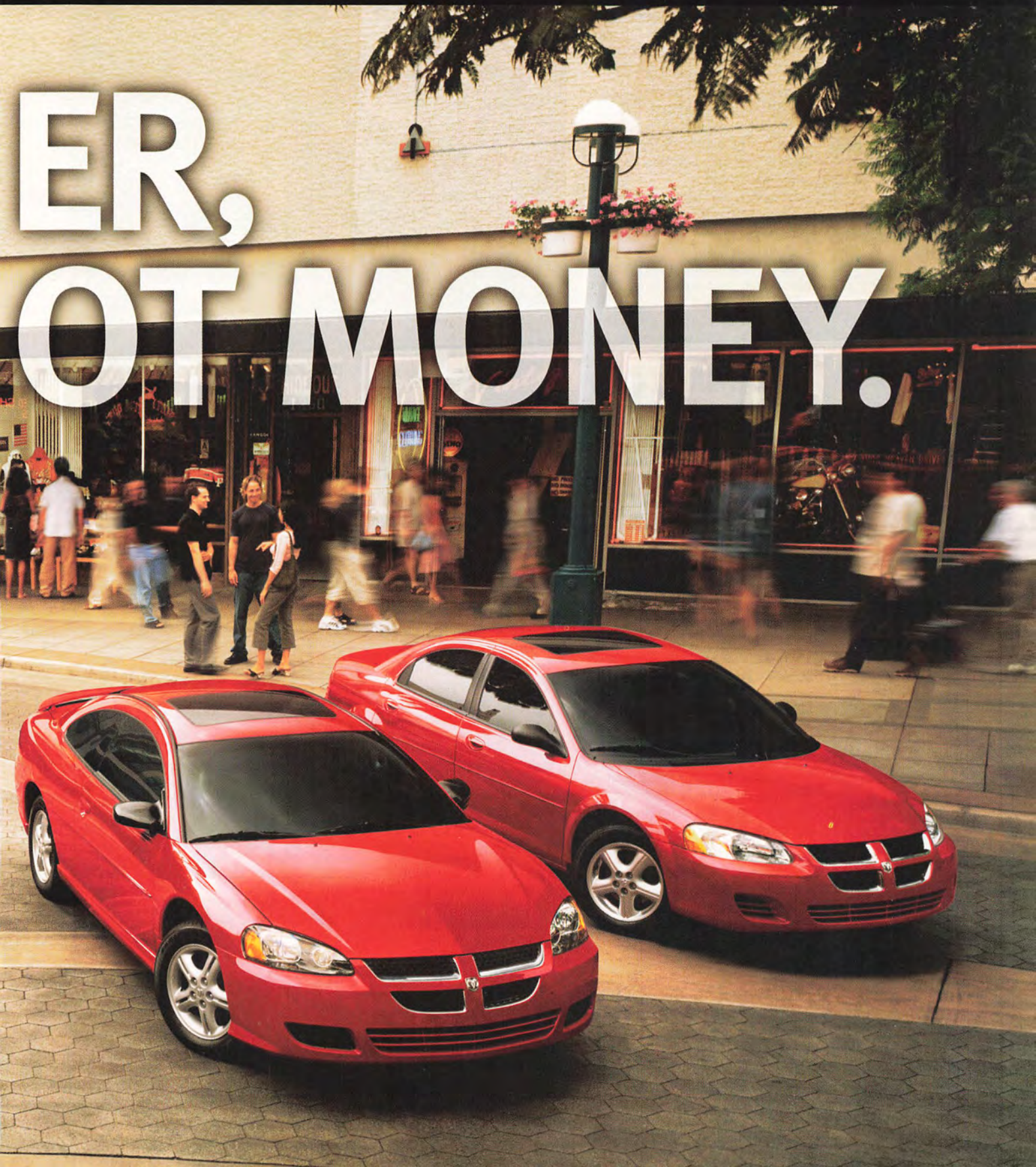


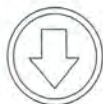
GRAB LIFE BY THE HORNS



DODGE

ER,
OT MONEY.





SOLVING YOUR POP CONUNDRUMS SINCE 2001



Joe Elliott: "Smell my armpits, you pathetic little French frogs!"

What is mumbled at the beginning of Def Leppard's "Rock of Ages"? I think they're saying something in German.

MERARI MOTOLA, MIAMI BEACH

The "words" opening this hit from 1983's *Pyromania* — "Gunter lieben glauben globen" (or something like that) — aren't real German, or any other language. Reports that the voice was that of the Swedish Chef from *The Muppet Show* were also off-base.

Producer Mutt Lange, who oversaw the *Pyromania* sessions, was apparently bored of calling out "one-two-three-four" and improvised some vaguely Teutonic nonsense that earnest fans have parsed for meaning like tea leaves for the past 20 years. "[Someone] said that it's German for 'running through the forest silently!'" Leppard singer Joe Elliott once said with a giggle.

I need to know: Who really invented the remix? It can't be P. Diddy!

RUTHIE JONES, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

You're right — the claim of P. Diddy's 2002 album, *We Invented the Remix*, came 35 years late. The idea of remixing an existing track surfaced in 1967 in Jamaica, where an engineer gave DJ Ruddy Redwood a recording of the Paragons' hit "On the Beach" with the vocals accidentally omitted.

Redwood suspected the spacious instrumental groove might be even more dance floor-friendly than the original, so the DJ played the single and the instrumental back-to-back, creating the first "dub" version. "You could hear the dance floor rail, man," Redwood said. "It was very happy." Soon, the reggae scene was swamped with instrumental tracks with increasingly freaky dub effects.

I heard Oprah Winfrey say that Aretha Franklin took her in once when she was homeless! Is that true, or is Oprah just trying to boost her ratings?

KEVIN DELACORTE, CINCINNATI

It's not quite true — the tale's gotten much taller since August 1968, when Winfrey, 14 and homeless in Chicago, apparently spotted the Queen of Soul stepping from her limo. Winfrey spun a sob story (literally) about having been abandoned (though she had actually run away from home). Franklin pulled \$100 from her purse and handed it over. "It was a great acting job," Winfrey later recalled, though when the now-rich talk-show host recounted the incident to Franklin, the singer claimed she had no memory of it.



Fact: Nikki Sixx once murdered an electric guitar with his bare hands!

I just read Mötley Crüe's amazing book *The Dirt*, and I wondered if any other rock stars besides Nikki Sixx have died and then been brought back to life.

MATT CONCEPCION, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

Rock history has had a few Lazarus-like recoveries — several, for some reason, in 1996. That January, Mark Linkous of Sparklehorse overdosed on Valium and antidepressants in London — he was clinically dead for two minutes, and wheelchair-bound for 18 months after

that, having lost circulation in his legs while unconscious for hours.

In May 1996, Depeche Mode singer Dave Gahan's heart stopped for two minutes after he overdosed on heroin and cocaine in Los Angeles's Sunset Marquis Hotel. Then, that July, Pantera's Phil Anselmo OD'd on heroin in Dallas and was "dead" for nearly five minutes. "There was no lights, no beautiful music, no nothing," he said of the afterlife. Maybe he wound up in the wrong place.

Was Billy Corgan that kid on *Small Wonder*?

JEREMY BELLIS, WEST VALLEY CITY, UTAH

OK, so the guy in that weird show with the little-girl robot looked just like Smashing Pumpkins' ex-commandante. But when *Small Wonder* hit the airwaves in September 1985, Corgan was already an 18-year-old playing in his first band, the Marked, in Chicago.

The 12-year-old kid on the show, Jerry Supiran, who also had a bit role in *Newhart*, seems to have quit TV. Oh, and Marilyn Manson wasn't the kid on *The Wonder Years*, either. Who starts these rumors, anyway? [BLENDER]



Rosy! Corgan (above) and Jerry Supiran



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The Greatest Songs Ever!



BLENDER EXPLORES THE FINEST TUNES IN HISTORY

Despite his nutty stage antics in zero-gravity boots, Beck's fashion statement failed to catch on in L.A.

Loser

"Man, I'm just the worst rapper in the world!" moaned folk-rock weirdo **Beck**. But that didn't stop his bluesy hip-hop debut from becoming a generation's anthem

★ WRITING A SONG that taps into the psyche of a rising generation, earns a gold disc and spawns a multi-platinum career should transform any struggling musician into a very happy guy. But for Beck, the success of his nihilistic debut single, "Loser," came with a stinging barb.

"The people who took that song to heart," he later said, "were the popular people, the attractive, stronger ones. But it was coming from myself, feeling displaced from the '80s, a time of materialism where everybody was cashing in and making money. . . . The people who embraced it represented the reason the song was written."

At the dawn of the '90s, Beck Hansen was a scuffling, folksy coffeehouse singer-songwriter with a heart full of compassion and a head full of ideas — one of which would propel him out of the folk dens and into the arenas: "I had always heard that Delta-blues rhythm in hip-hop. I remember early on playing slide guitar and thinking that slide guitar on a hip-hop beat would sound real good. I had that in mind for years."

The idea didn't come to much until one night in January 1991, when Beck played his steel guitar on the couch in the apartment of Karl Stephenson, an aspiring producer-songwriter. The pair had been introduced that day by Tom Rothrock, owner of the Los Angeles indie label Bong Load, which had signed Beck weeks earlier.

"I had some ideas of some grooves, and I played them for Beck," Stephenson has said. "I had taken several sitar lessons, so I laid some sitar into a track to see what he thought of it, and he started scribbling down some ideas onto a piece of notebook paper, and after a couple of hours, we roughed out an

"The beauty of it hit me right between the eyes." JOHN CALE



Beck gets totally high on grass, 1994



The dust brother: Beck gets his freak on in the "Loser" video.



idea for 'Loser,' the first song we ever did together."

As Stephenson continued to build the track, he added more samples, including a slice of Dr. John's "I Walk on Gilded Splinters" and an oft-quoted line that appeared in the movie *Kill the Moonlight* (which didn't get distributed until years after "Loser" was released): "I'm a driver/I'm a winner/Things are gonna change soon, I can feel it."

Beck started freestyling lyrics, trying to rap in the style of Public Enemy's Chuck D. "When [Stephenson] played it back," Beck said, "I thought, 'Man, I'm the worst rapper in the world — I'm just a loser.' So I started singing, 'I'm a loser, baby, so why don't you kill me.' I'm always kind of putting myself down like that."

When the track was done, Beck felt it was an intriguing demo but nothing more: "The raps and vocals are all first takes. If I'd known the impact it was going to make, I would have put something a little more substantial in it."

Rothrock's response was exactly the opposite. Convinced he had a

major hit on his hands, he took "Loser" to his friend Tony Berg, who had just started working in the A&R department at Geffen Records. "Tom came to me with a vinyl pressing of 'Loser,'" Berg says, "and I just lost my mind when I heard it. He left my office, and I swear, by the time he got home, I had left a message asking him to introduce me to this guy."

Determined to sign Beck, Berg began promoting "Loser" with a new fervor. "He gave it to me for my show, *Morning Becomes Eclectic*," on KCRW-FM, recalls L.A. disc jockey Chris Douridas. "In my job, you get sent 50 CDs a day, but as soon as I dropped the needle on that 12-inch, I knew all hell would break loose when I played it — which I did the next morning. The phones started ringing. You could feel it having an impact. Then other radio stations started calling to ask where I'd got it."

As the buzz spread, Anheuser-Busch pitched in early with a \$250,000 offer for the right to use the song in a Budweiser commercial. By the end of the year, 15 labels were bidding for Beck.

VITAL STATISTICS

SONG
"Loser"

ARTIST
Beck

LABEL
Geffen

PERFORMERS
Beck Hansen
guitar, vocals

PRODUCERS
Beck Hansen,
Karl Stephenson

FIRST CHART PEAK
March 5, 1994

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
10

But he proved a difficult fish to catch. Mark Kates, then a colleague of Berg's, said at the time that Geffen's appreciation of Beck's artistic integrity won them his signature: "It was our offer of freedom to make his music his way that appealed to him." (That, and perhaps also a rumored phone call to Beck from the mogul David Geffen himself.)

Well aware that "Loser" did not reflect his overall sound, Beck sought a deal that would give him the creative liberty to release anything he wanted — but he knew Geffen had sued its star Neil Young for *Everybody's Rockin'*, a 1983 album it deemed "uncommercial." Beck's lawyer negotiated a compromise, giving Geffen the option to release those songs it deemed commercial, and allowing Beck to release more leftfield material on indie labels.

Reissued with Geffen's marketing muscle behind it, "Loser" became an international hit, transforming Beck (unwillingly) into a slacker icon — effectively, a successor to Kurt Cobain, who killed himself less than three months after "Loser" was released. Even one of rock's elder statesmen, the Velvet Underground's John Cale, was taken with it: "The beauty of it hit me right between the eyes."

Beck later reflected, "The situation was strange and awkward, because the song was a personal joke and wasn't originally intended to be released. It was already two or three years old by the time it got popular. It's like an old specter that won't go away." **JOHNNY BLACK**



WHO'S WHO >>>



BECK HANSEN

Ever-changing musician who has evolved from anti-folkie to slacker king to respected, eclectic artist. Cowrote "Loser" in 1991.



TOM ROTHROCK

Founder of indie label Bong Load. Coproduced Elliott Smith's 2000 album, *Figure 8*. Now runs the record label Acid Blues.



KARL STEPHENSON

Maverick producer-songwriter. Records as Forest for the Trees, whose second album is due out later this year.



TONY BERG

A&R exec who signed Beck to Geffen Records. Later moved to Virgin and is now a top A&R exec at Artist Direct.



YOU SEND QUESTIONS, WE GET ANSWERS. WHO LOVES YA, BABY?

Tim McGraw

You wanted to know about the country superstar's alcohol consumption, spending habits, squirrel-eating history and whether wife Faith Hill has ever made him sleep on the couch. So guess what? We asked him!

BY CLARK COLLIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT MAXWELL

★ "I'M ABOUT TO kick this damn interviewer out," Tim McGraw drawls into a cell phone, pacing around his Nashville office. "He's an asshole!"

Luckily, the 35-year-old country megastar is only kidding — and his audience on the other end of the phone is none other than his lovely and even more successful wife, Faith Hill. With his aw-shucks humor, omnipresent hat and All-American better half, McGraw in many ways fits the modern country-star stereotype.

But he is also a diaper-changing "Father of the Year" as happy discussing Rush's back catalog as Willie Nelson's. A Nashville maverick who "doesn't give a shit" what the town elders think of his career decisions, such as recording his new CD, *Tim McGraw and the Dancehall Doctors*, with his long-time touring band and not the requisite session musicians. Tonight, McGraw intends to thank his group by buying each one a vintage muscle car.

He's so excited about the purchases that *Blender* apologizes for delaying him with your questions.

"Aw, shit, you kidding me?" he says, laughing. "I could be working for a living!"



Fact: McGraw is actually giving *Blender* the finger.

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What part of Faith's body turns you on the most?

FAITHFREAK, TEMPE, ARIZONA

Her brain! But she's got a great ass, too.

You're revealing a very hairy chest on the back of your new CD, which I have no problem with. But have you ever considered shaving it?

TALBOTG, PORTLAND, OREGON

It's actually hair implants! [Laughs] Why in the world would I ever shave it? It would hurt too much growing back in. I'm actually growing it because I'm hoping for a comb-over one day.

Is it true that the manner in which you recorded your new album — holing up with your band for months in a

house in a remote locale — was influenced by Led Zeppelin?

THEMOSTHATEDSINGER, OKLAHOMA CITY

Led Zeppelin, the Eagles, all those guys — you used to hear stories about them going up in the mountains and cutting records. Same with Waylon and Willie and a lot of the country artists in the '70s I really love. You know, '70s music is hard to beat. There's just so much heart and soul. A lot of it was done that way: going off somewhere and cutting a record. So that's what we did.

As an Eagles aficionado, can you explain to me what the hell the lyrics to "Hotel California" are about?

CWOOD, LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY

No. But I'm from Louisiana in the Bible Belt, and we were scared to listen to the Eagles when we were kids, because we always heard that it was about the First Church of Satan. The story was that [renowned Satanist] Anton La Vey bought the Hotel California in 1969 and turned it into the First Church of Satan. That's what we heard. I don't know how true that is.

You and Faith have three girls. Are you going to try for a boy?

UMORRIS, INDIANAPOLIS

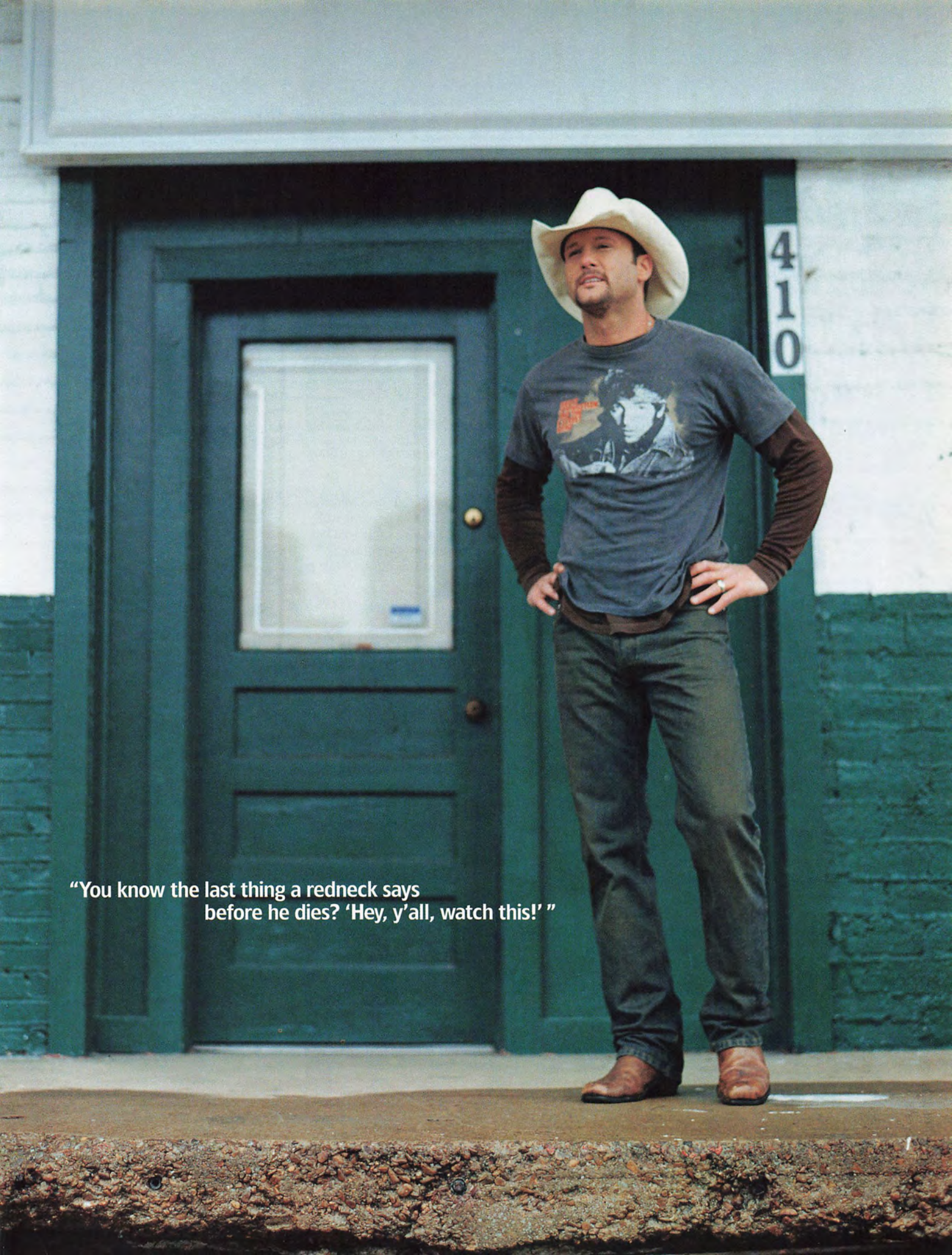
Well, we're young. But when you've got three kids, the answer to that always depends on what day you ask. I do like to practice, though.

What did you spend your first big rock-star check on?

LBARTH, LAKEWOOD, CALIFORNIA

A truck. A used burgundy step-side Chevy pickup. I got the check from a songwriting deal. I think the company folded.

What was going through your mind when you and Kenny Chesney →



"You know the last thing a redneck says
before he dies? 'Hey, y'all, watch this!'"

were arrested in 2000 outside of Buffalo, New York, for "horse rustling"?

DANNY365, DARIEN, CONNECTICUT

"Shit." What actually happened was the daughter of the deputy sheriff had her dad's horse backstage — when I say *daughter* everybody thinks it's a kid, but this was a thirtysomething-year-old woman. She asked Kenny if he wanted a ride, and he said yes.

Well, her dad came out and saw somebody on his horse, and these yahoos driving by in a police car had no idea what was going on — and they just jumped on us. I think they realized they had to go all the way once they'd made that mistake. Was I worried about going to jail? No. We felt real confident that once everybody heard what happened they'd understand what really went on.

Who can hold his liquor better: you or Chesney?

DRUNKJON, LUBBOCK, TEXAS

Me, absolutely. Kenny's no lightweight, though. He can hang in there. But I've left him in the dust a couple of nights on tour.

I've never seen you without your trusty cowboy hat. How many do you own, anyway?

BDELANEY, CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

I own three or four cowboy hats, but there's only two that I wear most of the time. I hate putting on a new hat. At awards shows I'll have nice suits and this old hat. I finally broke down last year and got a new one. You've just got to break it in, get it comfortable. I worry that if I sing without my hat people might think, "Who is this guy?"

When you were 11, you learned that the man you thought was your biological father was actually your stepfather, and that your biological



That's Sheriff McGraw to you, son.



Now that's good eatin'.

dad was baseball pitcher Tug McGraw. Did that freak you out?

CARDSPOOL, ST. LOUIS

I guess it did. But I think everybody around me had a tougher time with it than I did. I was an 11-year-old kid, not in a very stable environment. So I guess it was almost a little bit of a relief.

Can you throw a curveball?

ROKKERJOHN, NAPLES, FLORIDA

Yeah, no big deal. But I'm not much of a pitcher. I was a shortstop. I hit pretty well. I hit my dad now and then. And he can still throw!

Why don't you write songs?

HEDDALETTUCE, PASCAGOULA, MISSISSIPPI

Laziness. And, probably, lack of confidence. Every now and then I'll pick up the guitar and write a few things, but I never finish them. And I never think they're worth a shit, either.

Did you really used to hunt squirrels for lunch when you were in college?

DON_STONE, SEDONA, ARIZONA

I didn't, but my roommate did.

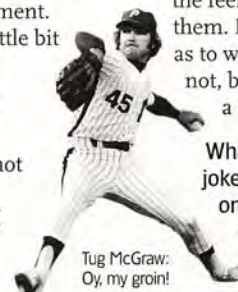
Except I wouldn't call it hunting. We lived in a neighborhood, and they were really fat squirrels because they ate all the time. Toward the end of the month in college you run out of money, and luckily one of my roommates was a big hunter, so we used to eat a lot of deer meat.

But if there wasn't any food, he'd go out with a pellet gun in the backyard, pop a squirrel and fry it up. I don't like squirrel. It tastes like rat, although I've never eaten rat. But if you're hungry enough, you'll eat anything.

I read that recording the new album with your band, the Dancehall Doctors, rather than with studio musicians was a "revolutionary" act for a country artist. Just how tight-assed is Nashville, anyway?

GRADMISM, OZONE PARK, NEW YORK

I didn't think it was revolutionary. But it's not very common in Nashville to record with your touring band. I just didn't think I could get the feel I wanted without using them. But I never look at things as to whether they're risky or not, because I really don't give a shit.



Tug McGraw: Oy, my groin!

What's the best practical joke that you've ever played on someone?

BADASS106, NEW ORLEANS

We had [country-rockers] the

Mavericks on the road

with us in Canada, and [lead singer] Raul Malo used to sing a song where he had this old cheerleader-style megaphone. Before the last show, we took his megaphone, and our fiddle player took his pants off and sat on top of the mouthpiece end of the megaphone and took a Polaroid.

Next show, we hired this guy in a zoot suit to dance and give Raul the Polaroid. So there he was singing into this megaphone, with my fiddle player's big naked ass sitting on the mouthpiece. But he kept singing. You'd think it would smell bad, but he kept on singing.

Your recent single "Red Rag Top" alludes to abortion, and was subsequently banned from some country radio stations. Are you pro-choice?

KP_AB_LGL, PROVINCETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS

That's nobody's business, really. I'm a musician. I'm doing a song. I think that's everybody's individual choice. Nobody needs to be preaching to people. That's everybody else's choice that they keep inside them-



Tim: Hit factory

"I know Faith inside and out."



McGraw (left) and Kenny Chesney, 2001



With backing band the Dancehall Doctors, 2002

selves, and God forbid that they ever have to make it.

Has Faith ever made you sleep on the couch?

WONDA_B, ST. LOUIS

Not yet. Ha ha ha!

Do you think parity is a good thing for the NFL?

WILLYPARCELL, JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

Absolutely. The NFL's been exciting to watch this year because everybody's got a shot. Well, mostly. Detroit ain't got much of a chance.

I'm organizing a bachelor party in Nashville and was hoping you could recommend some good nightspots.

DOUG_E_STYLE, FRENCH LICK, INDIANA

There's a sign outside one club here that says WE'VE GOT 38 BEAUTIFUL WOMEN AND TWO UGLY ONES, but I've never been there. The Broken Spoke Lounge — that's the most happening nightspot in Nashville. Me and the band go in there a lot. But don't mention my name if you go there — I didn't pay my tab last time.

Are you a good dancer?

GABE420, NASHVILLE

Oh, yeah. I can two-step. I can moonwalk, break dance. . . . [A gullible Blender: "Really?"] Nah, I suck. I can't do any of that shit. If I had to make my living dancing onstage, I'd be broke.

If you could trade places with another rock star for a day, who would it be?

HELGAJ, VIRGINIA BEACH

Gosh, I don't know. I can't think of



McGraw suddenly remembers who he's married to.



Elton John's country connection



Elvis: Yet to leave the building

anyone who's selling more records than I am right now [laughs]. Actually, my wife's kicking my ass, as usual. But it keeps peace and harmony at home. No, it would have to be Elvis, in his heyday. The '68 comeback special — who wouldn't want to be Elvis?

Why did you choose to cover Elton John's "Tiny Dancer" on the new CD?

LEVON, WEST HELENA, ARKANSAS

We've been doing it live for a long time. So when we were going into the studio, we thought, "Why not cut something we know really well to make sure we've got something that we can play?" Elton's *Tumbleweed Connection* is as country as anything today. "Tiny Dancer" had steel guitar on it originally.

You've been named Father of the Year by the National Fatherhood

Institute, and you're writing a book about fatherhood. Can you give me some advice on being a good dad?

GREENJEANS, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

You know, I've got three girls, four including my wife. Then you've got the housekeeper, who's a girl, and the cook. . . . So I'm surrounded by women. I can't give any advice. I'm a guy, so everything I say is wrong! Just shut up and listen would be the only advice I could give.

What's the worst job you've ever had?

DAVEYK, AUSTIN, TEXAS

Picking tomatoes in Louisiana. I didn't like that job at all. What was so bad about it? It's picking tomatoes. Roofing, putting roofs on, in 100 percent humidity and 100-degree heat wasn't much fun, either.

Your lead guitarist, Darran Smith, says that when you play, the eyes of all the women in the crowd are locked onto your ass "like a tractor beam." Does that make you feel cheap?

GITPICK, ATLANTA

He's just jealous — that's pure jealousy! I never pay attention to them staring at my ass. I just hope they're listening.

Were you in the delivery room to witness the birth of your kids?

SWEEPEA, COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND

Yes. I think I videotaped a couple of them. I got to see the whole thing. I know Faith inside and out.

Last July, your uncle, Dennis McGraw, Tug's brother, was charged with fatally shooting a neighbor. Have you been in contact with him?

DAWN_PATROL, ANCHORAGE, KENTUCKY

No. I've never met him. I never even knew what he looked like until, on *Larry King Live* the other night, they were showing some tabloid pictures and on the monitor I saw a picture. It's a sad situation. I feel awful for everybody involved.

Is there a TV show that you and Faith never miss?

DEBBIE5658, DENVER

We like *Will & Grace*. *Dateline* — we never miss that. But we've really started liking *Everybody Loves Raymond*. That's really funny. My dad was actually on that one time, although I've never seen the episode he was on.

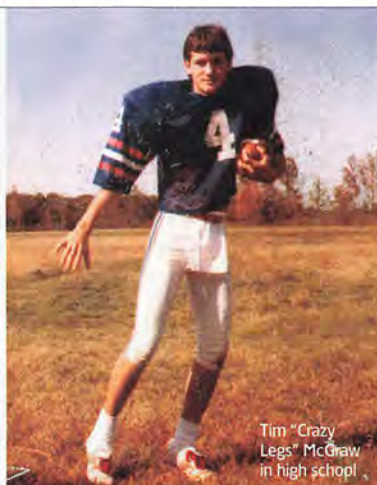
Do you have a favorite redneck joke?

CLEDUS_POOLO, BOZEMAN, MONTANA

You know the last thing a redneck says before he dies? "Hey, y'all, watch this!" [BLENDER]



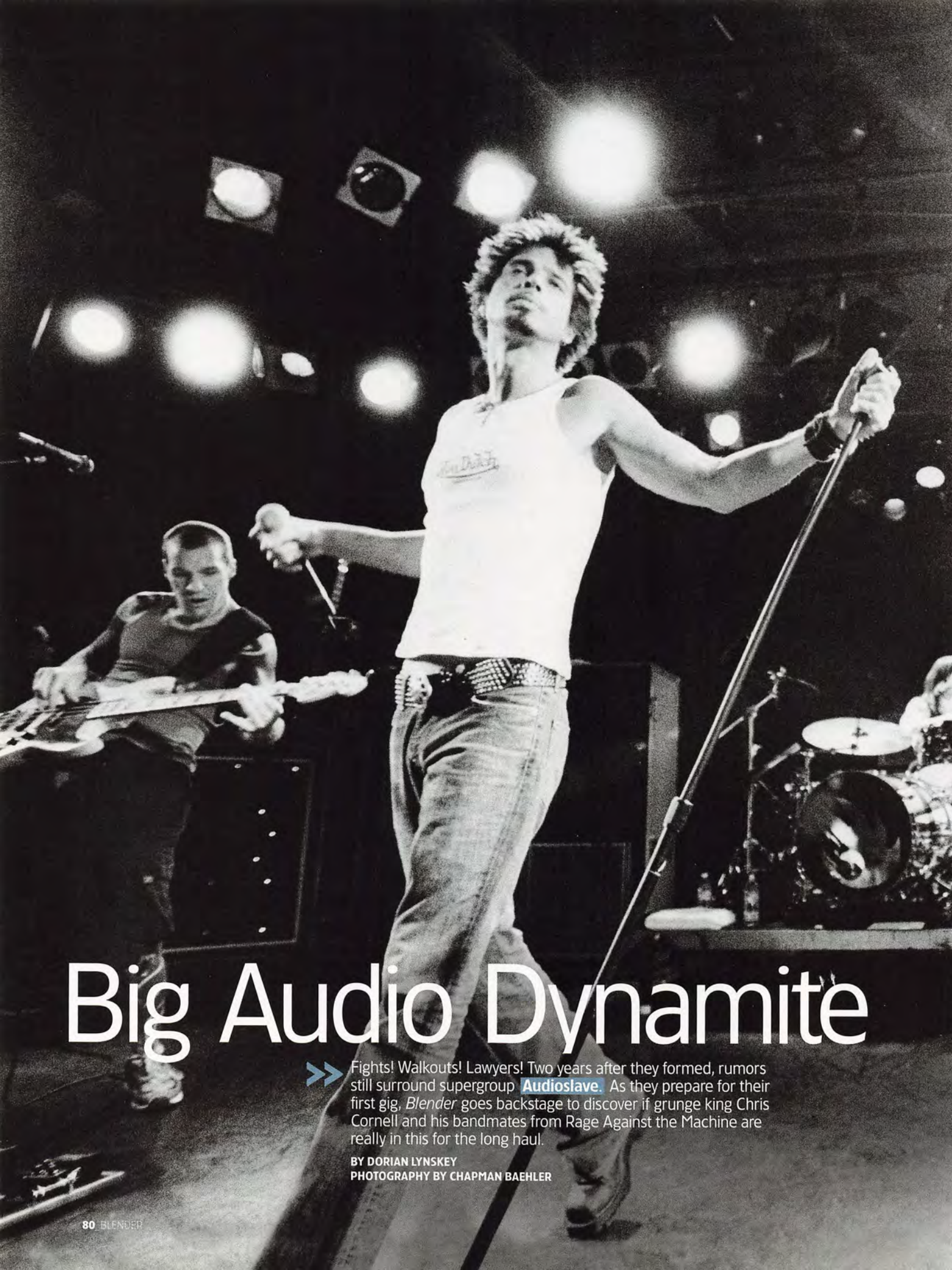
McGraw holds Grammy Award, wife's butt, 2001.



Tim "Crazy Legs" McGraw in high school

"Oh, yeah, I can two-step, moonwalk, break dance."



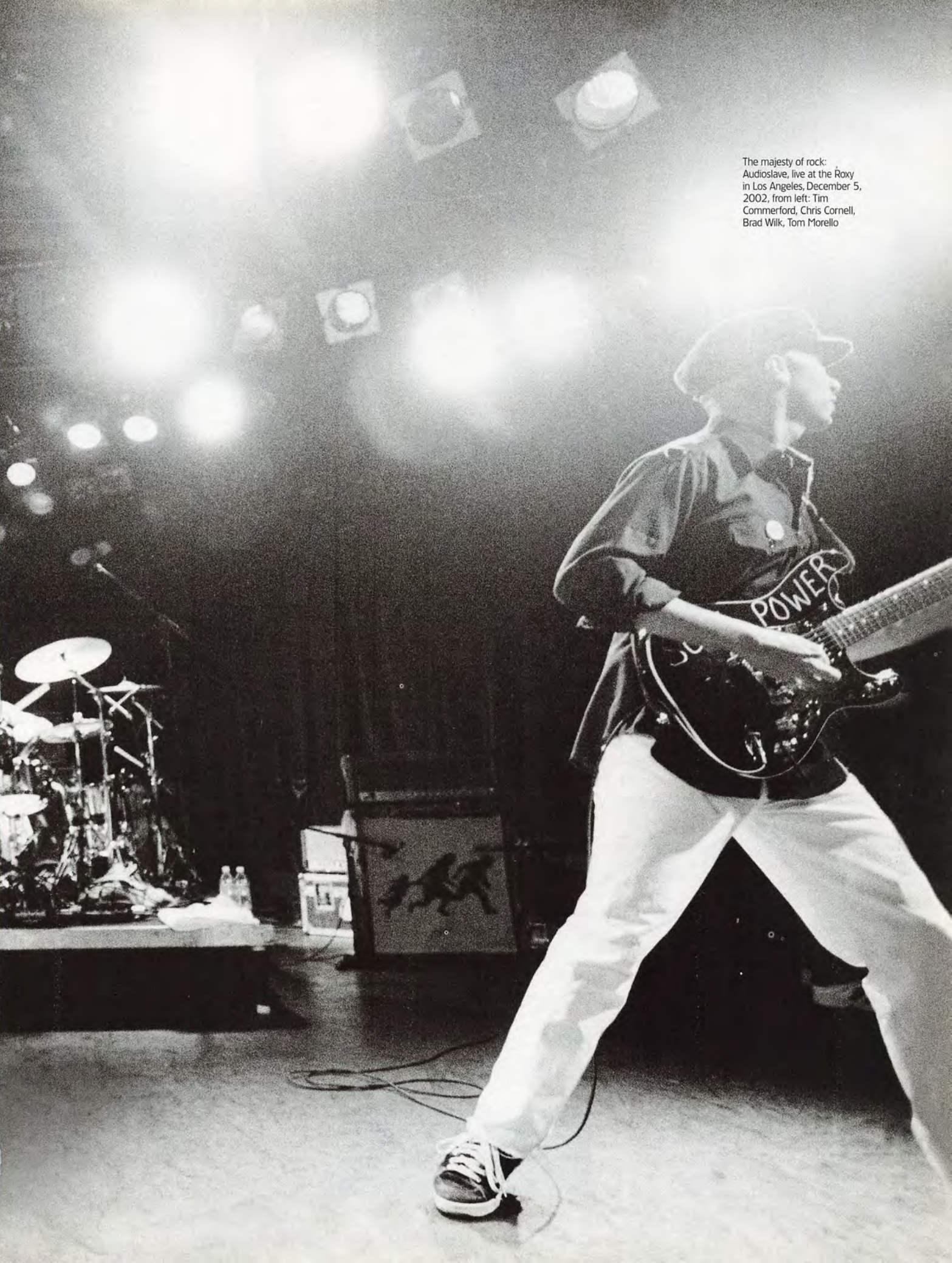


Big Audio Dynamite

» Fights! Walkouts! Lawyers! Two years after they formed, rumors still surround supergroup **Audioslave**. As they prepare for their first gig, *Blender* goes backstage to discover if grunge king Chris Cornell and his bandmates from Rage Against the Machine are really in this for the long haul.

BY DORIAN LYSKEY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHAPMAN BAEHLER

The majesty of rock:
Audioslave, live at the Roxy
in Los Angeles, December 5,
2002, from left: Tim
Commerford, Chris Cornell,
Brad Wilk, Tom Morello



Enjoying a post-rehearsal smoke at Leeds Studios, North Hollywood, December 5



THE PARKING LOT outside the storied Los Angeles rock club the Roxy is a hive of activity. Walkie-talkies crackle and equipment is unloaded, and from inside comes the barely audible throb of a sound-check in progress. Tonight the usual roster of pay-to-play hopefuls will be augmented by an unannounced special guest — and one young passerby intends to find out who. “Who’s playing tonight, man?” he asks a roadie.

“I don’t know, man,” the roadie lies.

The kid spies a familiar symbol on an equipment flight case. “Hey, that’s a red star. That’s communism, right?” You can almost see the cartoon light bulb illuminate above his head. “Are Rage Against the Machine playing?”

“No,” says the roadie, smirking. “They’re just selling off all their old stuff at the store down the street. You can get everything there.”

Our amateur detective wanders off, foiled, but he was half right. The flight cases do still bear the name of the defunct rap-rock insurrectionaries, and inside the club, a familiar trio of musicians stand on the snug stage: guitarist Tom Morello, bassist Tim Commerford and drummer Brad Wilk. But in place of Rage’s glowering rapper, Zack De La Rocha, is the slim, tan form of former Soundgarden frontman Chris Cornell. He’s draped nonchalantly over the mic stand

with one thumb hooked over his belt, looking every inch the rock star. It’s hard to believe he’s the same age, 38, as Morello. To an audience of Roxy staff and Morello’s mother, Mary, the foursome’s new band, Audioslave, runs through a half-dozen songs, ending with the multi-part balladry of their self-titled debut album’s next single, “Like a Stone.”

“Sorry,” Cornell says to his bandmates, sipping an iced coffee. “I was burping on the last chorus.”

Digestive rumblings aside, the preparations for what is only Audioslave’s second live performance ever are going well. Their first was a week earlier, at the Ed Sullivan Theatre in New York. They taped their rampaging first single, “Cochise,” for *The Late Show With David Letterman* and played another few songs for an audience of neck-craning Broadway bystanders and curious office workers.

“What I liked best about the crowd,” Morello says, chuckling, “was that on the right side there were these long-haired metal dudes thrashing furiously like we were Iron Maiden at Donington. And on

the other side, there were people with picket signs encouraging shoppers not to buy Gap clothing because they use sweatshops. That was the perfect balance.”

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE were the perpetually angry Los Angeles rap-metal pioneers whose every crunching groove and barricade-storming lyric was as disciplined as boot camp. Soundgarden were the psychedelic Seattle grunge titans with a fondness for tricky time signatures and foggy lyrical abstractions. If you were running a rock-star dating service, you probably wouldn’t have thought to match these two up.

So Audioslave’s inception in March 2001 raised some eyebrows, which haven’t been fully lowered since. Their debut does bear some unfortunate signs of artifice, such as the pompous cover art from Storm Thorgerson, Pink Floyd’s designer. Then there’s their name, which sounds as though it was chosen via a set of generic-band-name fridge magnets. Announcing their (swiftly canceled) Ozzfest tour slot last summer, Sharon Osbourne called them Civilian, but that was never their official tag. Commerford and producer Rick Rubin had a fondness for the moniker Black Hitler. “Then there was After School Special,” says the bassist, grinning like a teenager who’s in

“These three guys saved my life this year,” Cornell says.

★

his first band. "And we could just go by ASS. Ass!" He cracks up.

The morning after the secret show, the band nearly known as ASS is sound-checking in considerably more expansive surroundings. The Universal Amphitheatre is the venue for KROQ's Almost Acoustic Christmas, an annual jamboree of big-name bands. It used to be an acoustic show, like *MTV Unplugged*. Morello recalls the year Rage Against the Machine ended their set with an atonal 15-minute performance-art piece. The next year, KROQ decided to go electric. The two events, Morello cheerfully acknowledges, may not have been entirely unconnected.

Sound-check done, Morello settles down on a tiger-striped sofa backstage. He's intensely amiable and intelligent, like a conscientious high school teacher who stays behind after class to help students. But he would also make a great politician. Audioslave, in a sense, are on the campaign trail, repeating the same message with the dogged persistence of a pol on the stump.

So *Blender* will hear from each member, several times, about "great chemistry," "respect" and other such uplifting sentiments. There also appears to be a party line about Rage Against the Machine's demise, which holds that there is no "animosity" toward De La Rocha for leaving so abruptly. It's clear, however, that while Rage were still together, there was plenty of animosity to go around.

"The waters of Rage Against the Machine were stormy ones," Morello says.

"It wasn't like Zack was the problem and the three of us got along great," adds Wilk, a surprisingly gentle and self-effacing man. "There was constant turmoil between all four of us. I've been

in fights before with Tim in Italy, breaking hotel doors off."

Did you see the split coming?

He smiles. "I saw it coming after our first record, and that's no joke. We were always a band that was on the edge of not being a band anymore. Some people say that's what gives you your fire, and I agree somewhat, but I tend to believe that it was just a real fucking pain in the ass."

According to Morello, Rage Against the Machine didn't even record together in their later years; De La Rocha would add his vocals separately. A St. Louis Rams fan, Morello befriended the team's performance coach and brought him in to help negotiate a healthier working environment. That didn't stop De La Rocha from leaving, but it did tighten the bond among the other three. In October 2000, minutes before KROQ first announced De La Rocha's departure, the frontman phoned his bandmates to give them advance warning. Some were in to take the call; some heard the news on the radio. They now unanimously describe it as a "blessing in disguise."

At first, they toyed with maintaining the Rage sound, and jammed with Cypress Hill's B-Real — but it felt forced. They knew Cornell vaguely from Lollapalooza 1996 and occasional encounters thereafter, so when Rick Rubin brought up his name, reaction was positive, and they arranged a meeting.

"Chris was pretty straightforward," Commerford says. "I don't want to be the singer for Rage Against the Machine. I don't want to be in a political band — but I will do benefits." It's what you do more than what you say. In Rage we said a lot, but the reality is we really didn't do that much."

After their initial meeting, the four musicians convened in a Los Angeles rehearsal studio to begin work. They knocked out 21 songs in 19 days — more, Morello proudly notes, than Rage managed in their last few years together. Things appeared to be going swimmingly

↓ Rage Against the Machine in 2000: Always prepared to see the funny side. . .



Supergroups: What We've Learned

Attention, rock stars! Before joining forces with your fellow A-listers, read this and save yourself some heartache!

THE LESSON

FALLING OUT? TAKE SEPARATE LIMOS.

A Byrd (David Crosby), a Hollie (Graham Nash) and two Buffalo Springfields (Stephen Stills and Neil Young) made sweet music of peace, vocal harmony and love as Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. But they existed in a state of drug-fueled war, spending more than three decades splitting, reuniting and having solo, duo and trio careers of varying success. These days, when the others can persuade the old crank to leave his ranch, Young agrees to a tour.

THE LESSON

JUST BECAUSE IT'S CLASSICAL DOESN'T MEAN IT'S GOOD.

Brit prog-rockers Keith Emerson (formerly of the Nice), Greg Lake (King Crimson) and Carl Palmer (Atomic Rooster) specialized in pompous, inexplicably popular versions of classics. In reduced circumstances, Emerson, Lake & Palmer re-formed in 1991, sadly without the assistance of their legendary carpet roadie, whose job was to vacuum their shagpile stage before concerts.

THE LESSON

THINK OF THE MONEY.

John Wetton (ex-King Crimson), Steve Howe (Yes), Geoff Downes (Buggles) and Carl Palmer (hello again, Carl) topped the charts for two months in 1982 as Asia with their overproduced AOR. Bedeviled by personnel shuffles (hello again, Greg Lake), they sank speedily. The world's dullest fact: All their studio albums had one-word titles that began with A.

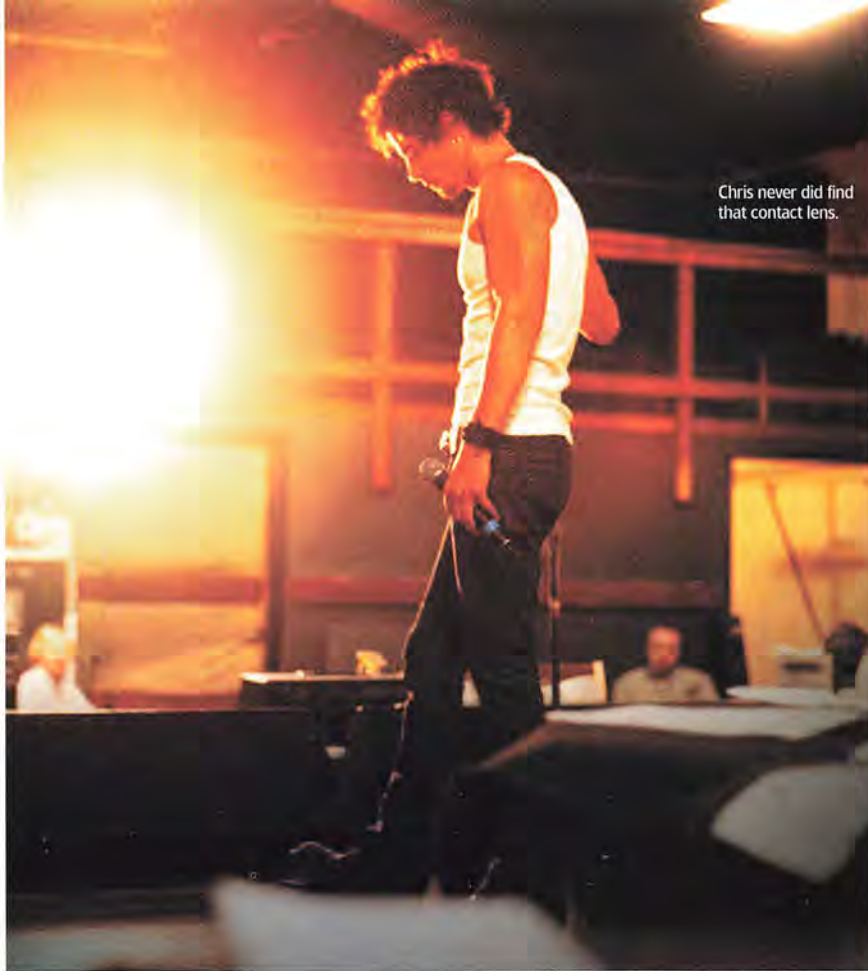
THE LESSON

MAKE SURE YOUR BANDMATE ISN'T FACING KIDDIE-PORN CHARGES.

The king of randy R&B, R. Kelly, met the CEO of hip-hop, Jay-Z, for last year's incorrectly titled *Best of Both Worlds*. In the end, Kelly did not become hip and Jay-Z did not cross over, although the album might have done a little bit better had Kelly not become embroiled in all those pesky underage-porn charges.

JOHN AIZLEWOOD





Chris never did find that contact lens.

★ AUDIOSLAVE

Cornell's. Could they not care less about Audioslave's '90s bona fides?

As it turns out, the audience's reaction is as hysterical as you could hope for from a seated crowd in a nonsmoking, theme park-affiliated amphitheater, and Audioslave's much-vaunted chemistry is evident. "This is Tom, this is Brad, this is Tim and I'm Chris," Cornell says above the whooping crowd. "These three guys saved my life this year." At the end of the set they gather for a group hug, an act sufficiently spontaneous to catch Commerford by surprise. Just as at the end of a soccer match, it's corny and touching all at once.

Backstage afterward, Cornell looks positively post-coital sprawled across the couch in his dressing room with his head thrown back, blowing plumes of cigarette smoke into the air. Work done, he is the picture of calm, regarding the world with wry amusement, but during the preparations of the past 48 hours, he cut a more remote and intimidating figure. That's the steelier side you can imagine triggering his decision to return to Seattle last March.

What did you mean when you said the other three guys saved your life?

"Well, I had a rough several years personally," Cornell says, refusing to elaborate. "The band really stepped up as friends to support me at a time when I needed it, and that brought us together almost immediately."

If Audioslave are covering up any internal tension, they're doing a fine job of it. They talk about one another with fondness and admiration. When Commerford found out he was going to be a father (his son, Xavier, is now 7 months old), the first friend he called was Cornell, who has a 2-year-old daughter, Lillian Jean. The band has plenty of shared interests, too: cars, motorbikes and about a dozen dogs among them.

"Yeah, dogs and transport," Cornell says. "What else is there? We did the whole pussy thing in the '80s, so we're stuck with dogs and transport."

Do you think you have a lot of convincing to do before people believe you're in it for the long haul?

"Well, it may change when people see us do those group hugs. Look . . . we're going to tour, write songs and make records." He speaks with serene conviction. "Whether people believe it's going to happen does not matter to me at all." [BLENDER]

until the unnamed band agreed to coheadline last summer's Ozzfest. That's when things fell apart.

"We had committed to a tour before we were ready," Morello says. "Our record wasn't complete, we didn't have a name and we had warring managerial factions. We literally couldn't function as a band."

At that point, Cornell and the ex-Ragers still had different managers who refused to cooperate. The impasse made progress impossible. Cornell returned to Seattle; one of the band's handlers announced to the press that the super-group was finished.

Morello shakes his head at the absurdity of the situation. "We had never even officially announced ourselves as a band, and already we'd broken up."

For the next six weeks, the band's future was uncertain. They still spoke on the phone daily, but Wilk admits to very real concern: "It scared me that this was going to be a one-off."

Eventually the deadlock was broken. Cornell and the Rage contingent fired their respective managers and signed as a unit with industry powerhouse The Firm.

"That period was arduous and unfortunate, but who gives a shit now?" Cornell reflects with a parched chuckle.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON, backstage at the Universal Amphitheatre, assorted members of System of a Down,

"We literally couldn't function as a band," Morello says.

★

No Doubt and Korn wind their way to the bar past frosted plastic Christmas trees and fake fireplaces. As Sum 41 bring their set to a raucous close on one side of the revolving stage, behind them Audioslave prepare to meet their public.

Until the moment they play the first crushing note of "Light My Way," nothing is certain. The Roxy show, which took until the fifth song, "Cochise," to finally sway the hard-to-impress hipsters, was inconclusive, and the KROQ crowd is younger still — far closer to Sum 41's average age than to Morello's and



Onstage at KROQ's Almost Acoustic Christmas, December 7

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THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT >>>>>>>

BUSTA RHYMES

1 BUSTA GOT THAT FOUNDATION-RATTLING VOICE FROM HIS FATHER.

"If my mother sounded like me, that would be a problem!" says the Brooklyn-born Rhymes, laughing. "But she says that even when I was a baby I had a hoarse voice."

2 HIS REAL NAME IS TREVOR.

The 30-year-old rapper was born Trevor Smith. "No one calls me Trevor," he says. "My mom calls me TJ, because I'm a junior."

3 BUSTA RHYMES: MATH GEEK!

"My favorite classes in school were math and science. I was real good at those. I'm still drawn to them. Everything in life and existence is based on math and science. Not

Woo-ha!! The apocalyptically minded hip-hop supremo is actually a math geek who once got a late slip from Sean Connery. But what's all this about Martha Stewart?

BY CLARK COLLIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEGO

social studies! Not English! There's many different histories and languages. But there's not many different maths and sciences."

4 HE'S A MEMBER OF THE FIVE PERCENT NATION, AN ISLAMIC SECT.

He claims the organization gave him confidence as a teenager and encouraged him to think about "more than just what they teach us in school: conspiracy theories, the end of cash society, all that."

5 THE TEENAGE BUSTA WAS NOT A LAW-ABIDING CITIZEN.

After his parents got divorced, he got into "nickel-and-dime hustling. But being a career criminal was not something I ever wanted to do. I needed to figure out what I wanted to do. But in the meantime, certain things needed to happen to maintain and to survive."

6 MR. RHYMES GOT HIS NAME FROM CHUCK D.

In 1986, Rhymes's high school rap crew, the Leaders of the New School, were taken under the wing of Public Enemy, whose leader gave

Rhymes his hip-hop moniker. Not just because the precocious barker could bust a rhyme about anything: "He said I reminded him of a football player [University of Oklahoma half-back Buster Rhymes]. Said it fit me."

7 HE USED TO THINK PUBLIC ENEMY WERE "ASSHOLES."

"I wasn't cool with [PE producer] Hank Shocklee. We're cool now, real cool now. But back then it was what it was. We weren't cool. There was a lot of shit we weren't seeing eye-to-eye on."

8 FISTFIGHTS BEFORE LEADERS OF THE NEW SCHOOL SHOWS WERE NOT UNUSUAL.

They normally involved Rhymes and the group's founder, Charlie Brown. "We never fought to beat each other down," Rhymes recalls. "It was more, 'I'm gonna let you know that I'm not gonna compromise my moral integrity as a man.'"

9 HE DOESN'T HAVE A VERY GOOD MEMORY ...

The Leaders' big break came when they rapped on A Tribe Called Quest's 1992 single "Scenario," →



Busta with his first group, the Leaders of the New School: Er, word!



"Being a career criminal was not something I ever wanted to do."

SHIRT BY KENNETH COLE. TIE
BY BURBERRY. SUIT AND
SHOES BY ROCHESTER BIG
AND TALL. JEWELRY BY
JAKOB THE JEWELER

on which Rhymes memorably — if incomprehensibly — uttered the line “Chickity Chaco, the chocolate chicken.” Sadly, he claims to have “no idea” what the phrase means.

10 ... OR DOES HE?

“It was my way of expressing myself about women at the time,” Rhymes finally admits. “There is the ‘chickenhead’ category of women. Back then, we just called them chickens. Not all women. The groupie types who like to run around. Loose bitches.”

11 THE LEADERS OF THE NEW SCHOOL BROKE UP ON TV.

With Rhymes increasingly in demand as a guest rapper, tensions increased between him and Charlie Brown. The breaking point came during a November 1993 broadcast of *Yo! MTV Raps*, when Brown chose to boast about his own abilities rather than those of the group. “We realized that Brown was seriously on some shit,” Rhymes says. “We were going to whup his ass right there. We don’t talk anymore.”

12 THERE WAS A TIME WHEN BUSTA WOULD RAP ON YOUR SONG FOR AS LITTLE AS \$500.

Following the breakup of his crew, Rhymes took every job he was offered: “It didn’t matter whether it was two G, one grand, 500. I rhymed on everything.”

13 WOO-HA!!

After seven months spent working on his solo debut (1996’s *The Coming*), Rhymes, creatively blocked, had virtually nothing to show for his efforts. Then he heard the Sugarhill Gang’s “8th Wonder,” whose “woo-ha!” cry provided him with inspiration for his first single, “Woo-Ha!! Got You All in Check.” “I don’t know where they got it from, what made them do it,” he says. “Maybe it was the thing to do at the time. I thought it was cool for the song.”

14 HE HATES MAKING VIDEOS.

Even though Rhymes’s far-out, UFO-riding, muscle suit-wearing, Bootsy Collins-impersonating clips revolutionized the hip-hop video, he’d rather have stayed at home. “What’s the most fun time I’ve had on a video shoot? None. I put my best foot forward, but I don’t enjoy it. Video shoots are long, grueling days of performing.



Is it any surprise Busta never hits a home run?



Chuck D takes Flavor Flav back from the optician.

But if I’m gonna do it, I’m gonna do it right. So I always make sure it’s done in an exceptional way.”

15 HE KNOWS WHAT LIFE IS LIKE BEHIND BARS.

After he was arrested on a felony weapons-possession charge in 1999, Rhymes spent the night in jail. “What was it like?” he says. “You sleep on a hard bench and you’re around people you don’t know, and it’s cold — but other than that, it’s cool.”

16 BUSTA WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT POSSIBLE Y2K PROBLEMS, HE TOLD EVERYONE HE WAS GOING TO STOCK UP ON “FOOD, GOLD AND LAND.”

So it comes as a bit of a surprise to learn that he witnessed the dawning of 2000 in Times Square. “I wanted to be there to see whatever was going to happen. I mean, there really ain’t too many places you can run. So I stuck right here.”



17 SEAN CONNERY ONCE GAVE HIM A LATE SLIP.



While acting in Connery’s 2000 film *Finding Forrester*, Rhymes made the mistake of being two minutes late to the set one day. “The first and only thing he said to me was, ‘You’re late, Busta. And I will be marking this lateness on your report card!’ He’s a stern dude. But I respect him and learned a lot from him.”



Busta in 1989: “It’s good to be king!”

18 HE PREDICTED SEPTEMBER 11...

The cover of his 1998 album, *Extinction Level Event*, depicted the destruction of Manhattan in a manner eerily close to the real-life events of September 2001. “It’s crazy that something I obviously thought about manifested itself like that,” he says.

19 ... BUT IT SURPRISED HIM NONETHELESS.

In fact, when the first plane crashed into the World Trade Center, Rhymes was sleeping in his apartment just a few blocks away. By the time the towers collapsed, he was already en route to Long Island, where he spent the day with his family. “I didn’t see shit, because I didn’t stick around to see shit. I haven’t got the apartment anymore. I’m out of there.”

20 BUSTA THOUGHT #1: GEORGE W. BUSH HAS FUCKED EVERYTHING UP.

“I think about what he’s doing and how what he’s doing affects people. He’s fucked everything up. Fucked everything up. His father did before him, too.”

21 BUT DON’T HOLD YOUR BREATH FOR PRESIDENT RHYMES.

“That kind of corruption, running for office,” he says, “I don’t want anything to do with.”

22 HE LIKES DIAMONDS.

“I don’t have a favorite diamond,” says Rhymes, who, like many of his hip-hop peers, frequents the Manhattan shop of jeweler Jacob Arabo. “But I do have diamonds that are worth more than others. It’s great collateral. That’s all.

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Staind: *Dysfunction* (Flip/Elektra) 30471

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Matchbox Twenty: *Yourself Or Someone Like You Back 2 Good*, more. (Atlantic) 16207

Ozzy Osbourne: *Live At Budokan* (Epic) 45156

Soulfly: *3* (Roadrunner) 44863

Jorma Kaukonen: *Blue Country Heart* (Columbia) 44868

Glassjaw: *Worship And Tribute* (Warner Bros.) 44874

Sinch (Roadrunner) 44894

Superjoint Ritual: *Use Once And Destroy* (Sanctuary) 44897

Bowling For Soup: *Drunk Enough To Dance* (Silvertone) 44899

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Eagles: *Greatest Hits 1971-1975* (Asylum) 23481

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Kenny Chesney: *No Shoes, No Shirt, No Problems* (BNA) 43195

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Hank Williams: *The Ultimate Collection* (UTV) 45312

Enya: *A Day Without Rain* (Reprise) 38128

Bob Dylan: *Greatest Hits Remastered!* (Columbia) 30988

Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers: *Greatest Hits* (MCA) 02390

The Color Red: *Clear* (RCA) 45307

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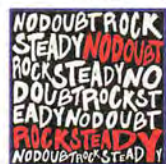
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"Got any stock tips?": With Martha Stewart at the 1997 Video Music Awards

Shit my kids can have in their possession, like in *Titanic*."

23 **LEGEND IS, BUSTA'S CONCERT RIDER ALWAYS INCLUDES A BOX OF RIBBED CONDOMS.**

Woo-ha!! Or maybe not: "I haven't put together my own rider in the last four years. So I don't know what the hell it says now. I usually don't stick around long enough to deal with it. I come in and do my show, make sure the money is collected, and I'm out of there. Fuck a rider. Whatever's in the room, I usually let my homeboys get at it."

24 **HE DESIGNS HIS OWN CLOTHES.**

Not just his own clothes but his own clothing line, Bushi Designs, which he runs with partner-in-pants Rashid Boothe. "For inspiration, I just feed off my own creative ability. I definitely keep up with what's going on. I like Sean John, Dolce, Gucci, Versace, Indigo Red, Diesel, Fubu, a couple of other hot cats like that."

25 **BUSTA'S CAR COST HIM \$45,000... IN EXTRAS ALONE!**

Rhymes's \$110,000 Mercedes-Benz G500 SUV is tricked out with all manner of rap-superstar essentials, including a VCR, two Eclipse 12-inch titanium woofers and a rear-vision mounted video camera. "Where's the camera? I ain't gonna tell you! Because if people know where it's at, they're going to try to avoid it. It's there for whatever threatening situations might need to be recorded."

26 **BUSTA SAYS MOUNTAIN DEW IS SOME DAMN FINE SODA!**

But then he would, given his gig as a Mountain Dew pitchman. "I had no clue it was going to happen," he says. "At some point in my career, the element of surprise went away. It ain't even a surprise anymore how surprising things can be."

"I'm not a liquor connoisseur."

SHIRT BY POLO JEANS

27 **BUSTA THOUGHT #2: IT AIN'T SAFE NO MORE.**

That's the title of his new album. "The events and occurrences since 9/11, that's a whole lot of shit that's been raging," he says. "The comfort level feels a little different. The safety of the environment has definitely changed."

28 **WHEN BUSTA MET MARIAH...**

"She was cool," he says of Mariah Carey, who sings on *It Ain't Safe No More*. "She's incredibly professional, incredibly beautiful. One of the best singers in the game, hands down, despite the trials and tribulations. On every level it was extremely pleasant."

29 **WHEN BUSTA MET MARTHA...**

The Best Dance Video Award at the 1997 MTV Video Music Awards was presented by perhaps the oddest couple ever to share



31



With son T'ziah and ex-girlfriend Joanne

a stage: Busta and homemaking guru Martha Stewart, whom the rapper would later call "one of the most beautiful people I've ever met." Despite this bonding experience, it seems Stewart hasn't been crying on Rhymes's shoulder in the wake of her recent troubles. "I'll speak to her once in a blue moon," he says. "But I haven't been following her problems."

31 **THE MAKERS OF COURVOISIER LOVE HIM.**

In the wake of his 2002 hit single "Pass the Courvoisier Part Two," consumption of the cognac increased by 4.5 percent, helping its makers, Allied Domecq, overcome a previously disappointing sales year. The only blot was Rhymes's subsequent admission to *Newsweek* that he is, in fact, "a Hennessey dude."

32 **ACTUALLY, BUSTA DOESN'T DRINK MUCH AT ALL.**

"I ain't trying to fuck my bladder up before I'm an old dude. I drink occasionally: birthdays, special events. I'll sip a little 'gnac. But I'm not a liquor connoisseur. I'm a barbiturate connoisseur. I smoke weed. I don't fuck with liquor."

33 **BUT HE'S EVEN GIVEN UP THE WEED — FOR NOW.**

"Yeah, I had to chill. I've been smoking it nonstop since I was 12, but every now and then you've got to take a break. It's not gonna hurt. But there will come a time in the near future when I'm going to nosedive headfirst into a bowl of that Grade A hydro, and we can have a good time." [BLENDER]

30 **BUSTA DID RUGRATS — THE MOVIE FOR HIS RUGRATS.**

He played — what else? — a dragon-shaped vehicle named Reptar Wagon in the 1998 animated flick. "It was cool. You go into a vocal booth and say a bunch of lines,



and that's it. I did that for my children. You do a bunch of shit all day where you're cursing up and down albums. But there's a whole other group of people you have to entertain as well."



WHEN GOOD POP STARS WEAR BAD CLOTHES! >>>>>

Shoot The Stylist!

To celebrate the Grammys' annual sartorial blowout, *Blender* gathered a team of experts* to assess the most grisly, eye-searing and downright insane pop-star clothing catastrophes of all time. . . .

BY VICTORIA DeSILVERIO

HARLEQUIN HORROR! >>>

FREDDIE MERCURY

Blender: Here we find the pomp-rock stadium peacock in a monochromatic diamond-patterned outfit while on tour with Queen in 1977.

Casey Spooner: Two words: *Harlequin bodytard*. I'm a fan, but even I'm not quite that ballsy! Yet.

Bobby Trendy: Look, the guy's band was called Queen for a reason. . . .





FEATHER FIASCO! >>>

TODD RUNDGREN

Blender: The prog-rock mad genius takes inspiration from our feathered friends in 1979.

Trendy: Even a peacock would run away from this look. Just wait until PETA gets ahold of him!

Gideon Yago: [In *Silence of the Lambs* mode] It uses the lotion or it gets the hose. . . it uses the lotion or it gets the hose. . .



EPAULETTE EGREGIOUSNESS! >>>

ELTON JOHN

Blender: The clothes-obsessed ivory tickler shows off a military bent while in concert in 1978.

Sasso: Is this one of Elton's flamboyant costumes, or did he finally make enough money to buy his own country?

Yago: It's amazing what you can get people to wear when you give them enough cocaine.



ROBOTIC RUINATION! >>>

MICHAEL JACKSON

Blender: The King of Pop's 1997 comment on the negative effects of modern industrialism.

Spooner: He should stop making music and instead get a job as a security guard.

Yago: Because little boys love to play with action figures. . .

Will Sasso: We are the knights who say "Heee heee!"



LINGUISTIC LUNACY! >>>

MACY GRAY

Blender: The soul songbird lets her dress do the talking at the 2001 MTV Video Music Awards.

Spooner: Nooooo! Total desperation! Sad. If you have to be so crass, at least make it a nice dress! It doesn't get worse than this.

Trendy: The only thing she should drop is her dang stylist! She looks like a giant melted Crayola crayon.



AVIAN APOCALYPSE! >>>

BJÖRK

Blender: The elfin Icelandic reveals a clothes sense as unique as her music at the 2001 Academy Awards.

Spooner: Genius! The only thing wrong is her baggy pantyhose. Bird good. Baggy nude hose bad.

Sasso: Like Joan Rivers always says: "There's a right way and a wrong way to wear a stuffed swan."

METAL MONSTROSITY! >>>

THE VINNIE VINCENT INVASION

Blender: The '80s metallers show what can be done with spandex, hair spray and tasseled shoulder pads.

Sasso: To me, the saddest thing about these guys is the fact that they've had more sex with gorgeous women than I've had hot meals. . .

Trendy: Invasion? What thrift store did they invade to get these tacky clothes? They look like the Heart sisters in drag!



* THE EXPERT PANEL >>>

CASEY SPOONER

One-half of exotically garbed electro duo Fischerspooner



GIDEON YAGO

Impeccably well-turned-out correspondent for MTV News



BOBBY TRENDY

Designer, fashion maven and regular on E!TV's *The Anna Nicole Show*



WILL SASSO

Newly svelte actor-comedian and a former cast member of *MAD TV*



★ SHOOT THE STYLIST!

HAIR HELLACIOUSNESS! >>>

CHRISTINA AGUILERA

Blender: The former Mouseketeer creates quite a splash at the 2001 Blockbuster Awards.

Trendy: She's got a stunningly beautiful face, but she's certainly giving the Lion King a run for his money. Big meow!

Spooner: I just want to go ahead and curl up in that hairdo like a squirrel.



NEW-ROMANTIC NASTINESS! >>>

SPANDAU BALLET

Blender: We know this much is true: In 1983, Spandau Ballet *really* liked wearing blankets.

Sasso: Say what you will, but there was a point in the mid-'80s when you could only hope to look this cool.

Trendy: I don't know what ballet they think they're going to while wearing those ponchos. Maybe one that has an Afghanistan theme. I haven't seen a headband like that since *Flashdance*!



CANARY-COLORED CRAPPINESS! >>>

MICK JAGGER

Blender: Modeling sportswear while on tour with the Stones in 1981.

Spooner: I love the necessary idiocy in arena wardrobe. To be seen from two miles away, you have to look like a court jester or a hazard sign. Reason enough to pray to be a failure.

Yago: This is why I love rock & roll: You can dress like this, and Brazilian supermodels half your age will still let you impregnate them. Mick rules.



NAVAL NIGHTMARE! >>>

DAVID BOWIE

Blender: Ahoy, me hearties! The Thin White Duke goes nautical in 1978.

Spooner: Who said you couldn't put gays in the military? I love the guy, but sometimes you have to step away from the stylist!

Yago: Every man has a breaking point. You and I have. Walt Kurtz has definitely reached his; he's obviously gone insane.

SUPERSIZED SLACKS! >>>

MC HAMMER

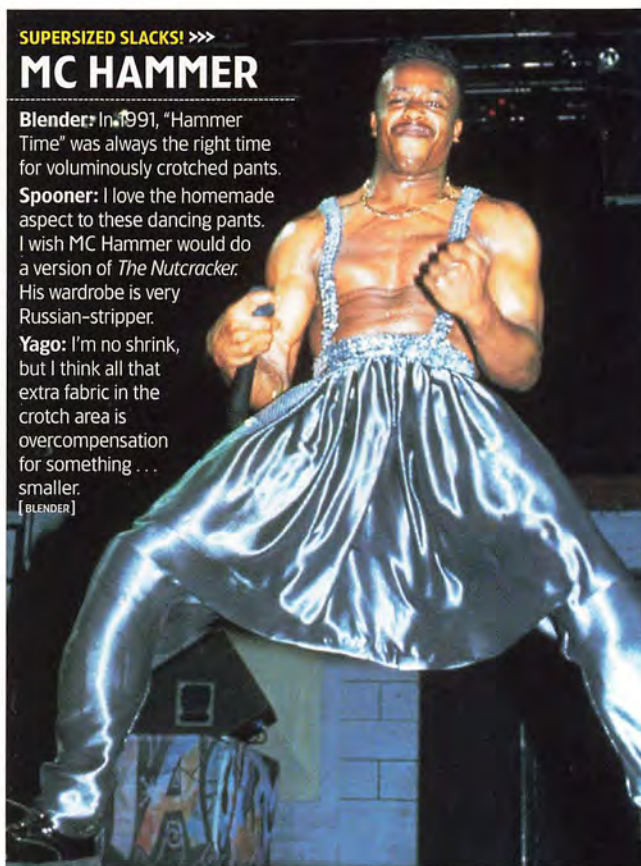
Blender: In 1991, "Hammer Time" was always the right time for voluminously crotched pants.

Spooner: I love the homemade aspect to these dancing pants. I wish MC Hammer would do a version of *The Nutcracker*.

His wardrobe is very Russian-stripper.

Yago: I'm no shrink, but I think all that extra fabric in the crotch area is overcompensation for something... smaller.

[BLENDER]



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Rock 'Til You Drop!



"WHY AM I HERE?"

ponders Melissa, a 23-year-old Brooklynite. Her voice is barely audible over the noise inside New York's Madison Square Garden. The Z100 Jingle Ball is in full swing, and the audience is making a racket somewhere between a jet engine passing overhead and the squeals of an abattoir. Melissa rarely attends concerts, but she has made an exception for tonight. "Well, John Mayer is cute, right? Carson Daly, he's here and he's cute too."

But what about the music? Melissa's date butts in: "You know who I wanna see? Paul Oakenfold." But Melissa is unimpressed. "What song does he sing? He's a DJ? Oh."

Why am I here? It's a question *Blender* will ask itself more than once over the next four days, as it embarks on a feat of superhuman endurance: travel to four cities. See four radio station-sponsored Christmas shows. Watch more than 30 live acts. Live off nachos and cheese dip. Come back with brain intact.

The radio-station Christmas show is an institution. Stations call in favors from acts they have supported, and put on groaningly titled festive galas: Jingle Jam; Frosty the Show, Man; Not-So-Silent Night. Bands spend December crisscrossing the country to play them. Their sets can last as little as 10 minutes. This

Thirty-one bands. 96 hours. 1,359 miles. Five chili dogs. One exhausted journalist. That was the final score after *Blender* crisscrossed the country to check out just a few of the star-studded Christmas concerts staged by radio stations in an effort to capture the hearts of the nation's youth. . . .

**BY ALEXIS PETRIDIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY C. TAYLOR CROTHERS**

year, there are more than 30 major events taking place. *Blender* is ready to test how enjoyable this grab-bag approach to live performance actually is.

Tonight is the Jingle Ball, thrown annually by the country's most powerful Top 40 radio station, Z100. The audience is 90 percent female. Some of the specta-

tors are so young, they clutch their harassed-looking parents' hands. Most, however, are in their early teens. They are here to scream.

They scream at Justin Timberlake, dancing impressively despite a broken foot. They scream at Carson Daly. Undiscerning, they scream at the Z100 DJs, some of whom could stand to lose a few pounds. When there are no stars onstage, they scream at advertisements on the stage-side screens.

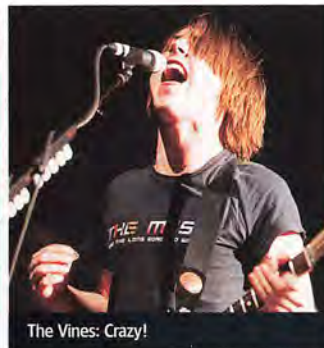
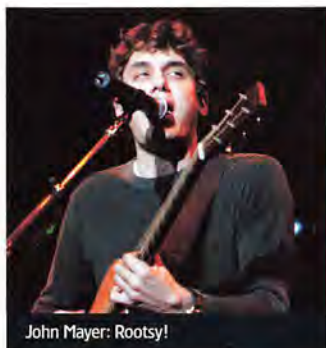
In fact, the only thing they don't scream at is Kylie Minogue. Perhaps her postmodern shtick, involving male dancers in heels and suspenders, is too weird for the assembled tweenies.

Grinning wildly, Minogue tries everything to win them over short of brandishing a loaded shotgun and demanding they applaud. She is beating her head against a wall of pubescent female hormones.

While Minogue slinks backstage to have her smile surgically removed, the arrival of John Mayer causes pandem-



Exhausted *Blender* journalist gets propped up by Box Car Racer's Travis Barker (left) and Tom DeLonge.



onium. Playing lengthy solos, Mayer mugs frantically. The faces he pulls suggest horrified despair. Some of the parents in the audience are showing similar faces, brought on by the inescapable shrill hysteria. It's a wearying experience, like being trapped in an enormous school bus on the last day of the year. When the stage revolves to reveal *American Idol* winner Kelly Clarkson, *Blender* suffers a temporary collapse of the will to live and scurries off to find a fortifying drink.

We return to find Destiny's Child slickly cramming hits into their allotted half-hour. Beyoncé Knowles asks the audience, "How many of you know about relationships?" Bearing in mind the average age here, the screamed reply translates as "Not many."

By now, the Jingle Ball has become an oddly numbing experience, like being repeatedly hit on the head with a rolled-up teen magazine. Nelly does his thing. Ja Rule and Ashanti arrive with the obligatory glowering posse. Ozzy Osbourne shambles onstage, says *fuck* after some prompting and then leaves.

Judging by the noise she provokes, tonight's star is Avril Lavigne. *Blender* asks a nearby fresh-faced middle schooler about the appeal of her soccer mom-endorsed punk. Does the tuneful angst of "Complicated" reflect the internal turmoil of an adolescent girl's life? She looks confused, then brightens. "Avril Lavigne is cute!" *Blender* nods sagely and reels into the night, ears ringing, head spinning. It is going to be a very long weekend.

bands that you wouldn't normally play with, and you play in front of a different audience. But that can suck, too, when you've just done a headlining tour and played D.C. in front of 4,000 people going apeshit. Last night, the kids were really lame. It was like they were expecting Creed to play or something."

Blink-182's Tom DeLonge, here to promote his side project, Box Car Racer, is similarly equivocal. The bands rarely get paid, he says, and never turn a profit because "it usually takes up every dollar just to get your equipment there."

Nevertheless, the benefits are obvious. "You have to do them, because you strike up a relationship with a radio station,"

DeLonge admits. "If the stations get your music to kids, why wouldn't you come and play a show? But I don't really like doing them, because Box Car Racer is kind of arty and improvisational for punk, and here it has to be done in a large space and within a certain amount of time."

Both men are being unnecessarily guarded: Box Car Racer's spacey, Fugazish emo gets a rapturous response, while New Found Glory's razor-sharp set is greeted with both crowd surfing and lustful screams. Nevertheless, their point about capricious audiences is apt. Early on, a half-empty arena gives the Vines a hard time, although whether this is because they don't sound like Creed or because singer Craig Nicholls doesn't sound like he's performing the same songs as the rest of the band is unknown.

Not surprisingly, the audience for WHFS's modern-rock extravaganza is older and more male than the New York Top 40 crowd. This group also has a markedly different attitude to the station's DJs, whose chief functions are to appear between bands, throw T-shirts into the audience and make a sound *Blender* will learn to dread: the Fucking Party Bellow.

Supposed to whip up a frenzy, the Fucking Party Bellow is a sentence hollered at enormous volume, in which the only comprehensible words are *fucking party*: "AAAAAAARoooooooooooo-rrrrraaaaaaaayfucknparty!?" But the Fucking Party Bellow is a risky business. If the DJs are lucky, the audience raises devil →

THE GIGS!

→ **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12**
Z100 JINGLE BALL, NEW YORK

Ashanti, Kelly Clarkson, Destiny's Child, Avril Lavigne, John Mayer, Kylie Minogue, Nelly, Paul Oakenfold, Ja Rule, Justin Timberlake

→ **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13**
HFSMAS NUTCRACKER 2002,
WASHINGTON, D.C.
 Box Car Racer, James Brown, Coldplay,
 the Distillers, New Found Glory,
 Queens of the Stone Age, the Vines, Zwan

→ **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14**
KPNT HO HO SHOW, ST. LOUIS
 Breaking Benjamin, Jimmy Eat World,
 New Found Glory, OK Go, Sugarcult, Unchained

→ **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15**
WKQX TWISTED IX, CHICAGO
 Box Car Racer, Disturbed, Jimmy Eat World,
 Local H, Public Enemy, 3 Doors Down, the Vines

Zwan: Doesn't Billy Corgan have long arms?



★ CHRISTMAS-CONCERT MARATHON!

horns, an indication that they are indeed *rrraaaayfucknparty*. More often, the crowd seems happier to hurl abuse and garbage.

Such is the fate of WHFS's Sports Junkies, a gang of Fred Durst-alikes who attempt to host a white-rappers' talent contest between sets by Queens of the Stone Age and Zwan. The audience is deeply impressed both by QOTSA's muscular racket and Billy Corgan's new band, whose sound draws from influences as disparate as prog-rock and New Order. The very appearance of the Sports Junkies, however, seems to provoke them into an uncontrollable fury: "Fuck you, assholes! You suck dicks!" Litter rains down on the stage. "Hey," complains one Sports Junkie. "What's with all the throwin' stuff? You gotta nix on that." This is hardly a positive atmosphere for the debut performances of three nervous Eminem wannabes. Even the guy who wins looks fed up.

Headliners Coldplay end up wearing a similar expression. By the time they roll out a gorgeous version of "The Scientist," a fair percentage of the spectators, mostly male and clad in hoodies and seasonally inadvisable shorts, has already beat its way to the exits. The remaining stalwarts are understandably wrung dry by six hours of alt-rock.

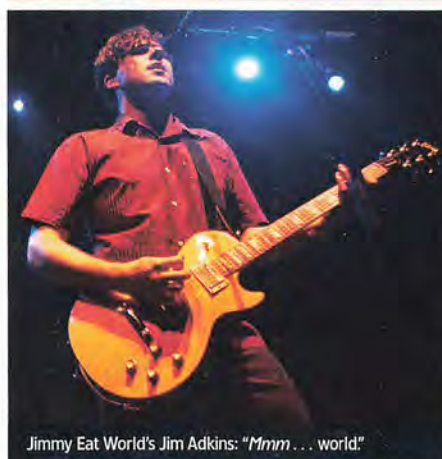
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

AFTER WASHINGTON, D.C., St. Louis's Ho Ho Show is a study in contrasts. Even at its peak, the HFSmas Nutcracker was a little over half-full. By 6 P.M., the 2,500-capacity Ho Ho Show is jammed. No one abuses the DJs from KPNT-FM. The Fucking Party Bellow has the desired effect. Each band enraptures the crowd. Devil horns are thrown to both the power-pop of OK Go and Sugarcult's zippy punk. The reductive grunge of Breaking Benjamin, a band that makes Puddle of Mudd sound like the Velvet Underground, is hailed by deafening cheers.

By the time New Found Glory and headliners Jimmy Eat World take the stage, St. Louis is practically flinging itself from the balcony with joy. This may have something to do with the fact that the balcony is over-21s only and awash in



> "Not a lot of bands come by St. Louis. A show like this is a blessing."



Jimmy Eat World's Jim Adkins: "Mmm... world."

alcohol. Alternatively, the crowd might just be drunk on gratitude. "Not a lot of bands come by St. Louis," says David, 21. "A show like this is a blessing."

Our final show is a marathon even by Christmas-concert standards. Chicago's WKQX-FM's Twisted IX lasts for seven hours. It no longer features Moby, who has procured a doctor's note after being beaten up in Boston. Hysterical with exhaustion, *Blender* is almost envious of him. The Twisted IX audience, not a techno fan in it, is overjoyed: Every time the diminutive star's name is mentioned, there's an eruption of seething resentment. Even the DJs fare better. A fat man in a top hat gets onstage and, with crush-

↑ Disturbed: Look at those bangs go!

ing inevitability, gives the Fucking Party Bellow. He is introduced as Turd.

Blender naturally assumes that fatigue is causing some kind of aural hallucination and asks a fellow patron for clarification: "Yup, he's called Turd. He's the craziest guy. He gets people to do dumb things." Dumber than calling yourself Turd? The mind boggles.

Familiar bands fly by in a blur. Craig Nicholls of the Vines walks onstage and immediately falls off it. The crowd is unimpressed. Sugarcult, Jimmy Eat World, Box Car Racer: a punk-rock version of *Groundhog Day*.

The evening's big surprise comes from Public Enemy. Most bands at these shows confine their remarks to thanking the radio station and telling the crowd they rock, but Chuck D. has other ideas. "How many of you here voted for Bush? Well, fuck you!" he snarls, raising a middle finger. Later, he tries to lead a chant of "Fuck the war!" The underwhelming response may have something to do with the number of off-duty Marines present.

Or it could be due to the very nature of radio-station Christmas shows. Enormous venues are filled with a crowd so diverse that anything too out of the ordinary is bound to flounder. The middle way inevitably succeeds, explaining the ecstatic howling with which Chicago greets 3 Doors Down, a band that makes Breaking Benjamin sound like the Velvet Underground. Headlining local heroes Disturbed go down even better, but by now *Blender* is too weary to care. As the Allstate Arena erupts in an air-punching, devil horn-throwing maelstrom, the lure of the exit sign becomes irresistible. Chicago is *rrraaaayfucknparty*. *Blender*, meanwhile, is *rrraaaay* for bed. [BLENDER]



"IS IT OVER YET?" *Blender* watches lots of bands. Exhausting!

New York:
"Here we go!"

Washington,
D.C.: "Ho hum."

St. Louis: "Yes,
I'm a journalist"

Chicago:
"Blearrrghhh!"

BLENDER

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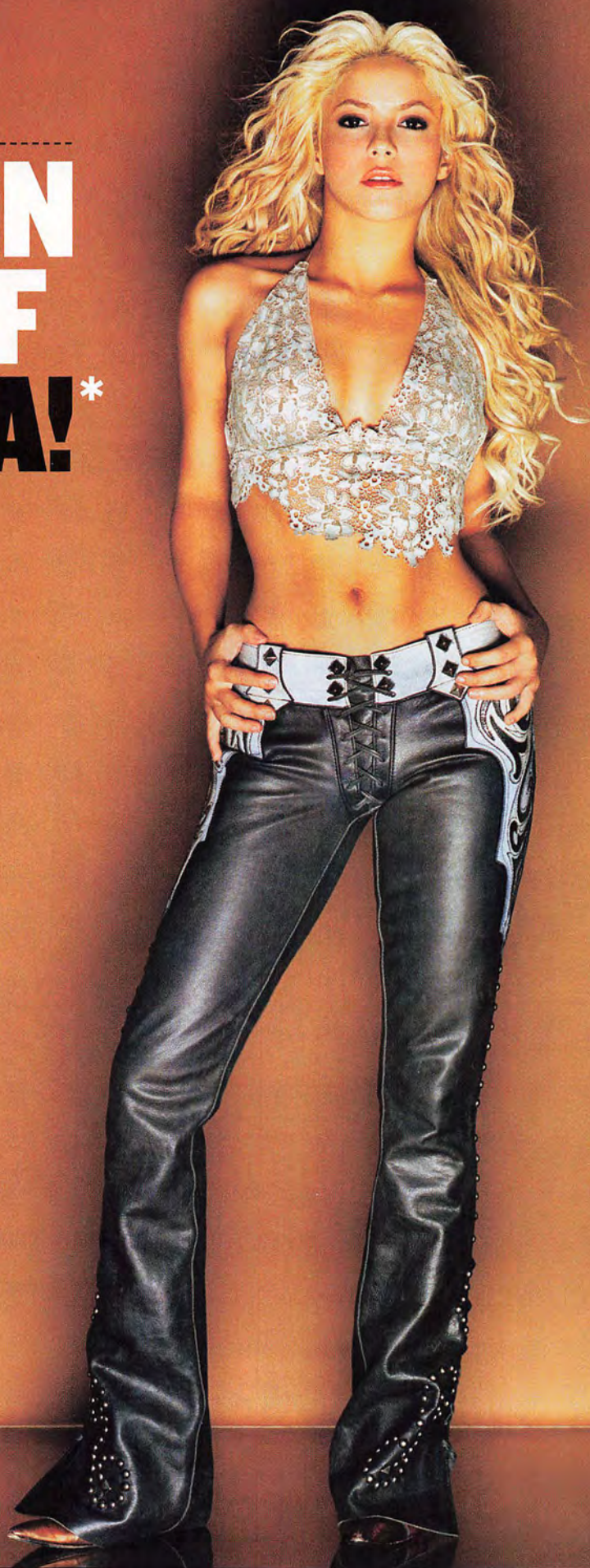
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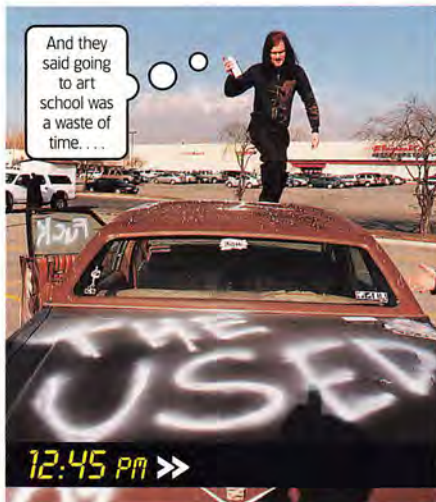
12:40 PM >>

The Used win title of "Worst
Pit Crew Ever." Clockwise
from top: Quinn Allman, Bert
McCracken, Branden
Steineckert, Jeph Howard

"Who Doesn't Want to F*#k Up a Car?"

Utah rockers **The Used** could have just wasted \$848 of *Blender's* cash on drugs, booze and hookers. Instead, they decided to do something *really* stupid and beat the crap out of a secondhand automobile. All right!

BY CLARK COLLIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOE TORENO



"DUDE, THIS CAR is pimpin'!"

The freezing cold of a December afternoon in Utah can do nothing to lessen the excitement of Branden Steineckert, 24, drummer with the shouty hardcore band the Used. And why shouldn't he be excited? *Blender* has given him and his bandmates \$848 to spend in the course of a day on anything they like. And they've already disposed of \$400 before arriving at our prearranged meeting point in the parking lot of a shopping mall in Provo, 40 miles outside Salt Lake City.

And what have these local hopefuls-turned-"screamo" heavyweights spent the cash on? The answer stands rusting before us: a piece-of-shit 1979 Cadillac Sedan Deville.

"We were going to get a Chevette," explains guitarist Quinn Allman, 21. "But we thought we'd have something with a little bit of class and style."

If by "class" and "style" he means "slashed seats" and "a roof that looks like someone's given it an acid bath," then Allman is right on. There is a method to the quartet's madness, however: The Used have decided that *Blender's* money shouldn't buy a car they can keep and treasure, but one they can destroy.

"We had so many different ideas about what to do," says bassist Jeph Howard, 24. "I wanted to pay some guy to hang around with us all day while dressed in scuba gear. Or lingerie. But who doesn't want to fuck up a car?"

Who indeed? And so it is that our heroes — Steineckert, Allman, Howard and singer Bert McCracken, 20 — walk through the doors of a ShopKo department store to purchase some car-killing equipment. As Howard debates the



"If Bert gets it into his mind that he's going to drive into a wall, he's going to do it," sighs the band's tour manager, Brian Schechter, of McCracken, who is currently dating Kelly Osbourne.

"I don't talk to Ozzy often, but we've had a chat," says McCracken, who was raised as a Mormon here in Utah. He met Kelly when the Used played 2002's Ozzfest tour. "I think he's more happy with his daughter dating a singer in a rock band than some guy who works for a computer company."

Having failed to find

enough suitable instruments of destruction at ShopKo, the band opts to complete the task in Salt Lake City — and get some tattoos while they're there. Miraculously, despite passing no fewer than five police cars, the Penismobile arrives unmolested at the band's preferred skin-art parlor, Big Deluxe Tattoos.

"Anyone in the band on heroin yet?" one customer asks McCracken, interrupting his cogitation on the possibility of tattooing a vagina on the "seam" of his balls.

"No," says Steineckert, smiling. "But I think Bert's probably working on it."

IN FACT, SINCE their self-titled debut album was released last June, the Used have had little time to work on anything other than touring — they've had eye-opening slots on Ozzfest, the Vans Warped tour and a stretch of gigs with Boxcar Racer. Their commitment to

merits of a golf putter versus a three-wood, and McCracken bemoans the store's lack of a decent "blunt instruments" aisle, Allman thumbnails his bandmates' personas.

"Jeph is the quiet but friendly one, Branden is the businesslike one and I guess I'm the joker," the guitarist decides. And what about McCracken?

"Bert is... uh... uh... a chemical mixture of Mick Jagger and a werewolf."

Such a description hardly seems to do justice to a man who, upon leaving the

ShopKo, asks a fortysomething female passerby if she'll pose naked for *Blender*, spray-paints PENIS CREW! along one side of the car and then, upon getting behind the wheel, promptly crashes the Cadillac into a lamppost.

"I wanted to pay some guy to hang around dressed in scuba gear."



5:13 PM >>



5:25 PM >>



5:45 PM >>

playing live — during which McCracken often throws up from a mixture of effort, exhaustion and alcohol — accounts for album sales that have now topped 100,000. That word-of-mouth success has made them the biggest thing to come out of Utah since, well, the Osmonds — one of whose old LPs Quinn grabs at a thrift store and plans to destroy along with the car.

"People are always asking what it was like growing up around here," McCracken says as he gets a touch-up on the Used's massive "stick man" logo, which decorates much of his upper body. "But it was cool. There are so many good-looking girls with hot asses. The Mormons feed them on just milk and beef, and they turn out like that."

By 4 P.M., the band's new tattoos completed and bandaged, we have adjourned to the adjacent Sears, whose parking lot will provide the site of the Chevy's destruction and whose Tool Territory section proves more than adequate for their auto-homicidal needs. Well, almost. "This sledgehammer isn't big enough!" Allman complains, holding the biggest mallet Blender has ever seen. Attracting the attention of a sales assistant, the guitarist demands "the biggest hammers you've got." The band



6:20 PM ★

"Bert is a chemical mixture of Mick Jagger and a werewolf."

purchases them along with an equally outsized double-headed ax.

And then . . . it's clobbering time! Each member of the Used takes a different section of the car. They begin reducing it to metal confetti while Blender stands 50 feet away — caution that proves justified when the head of Howard's golf club snaps off and lands on the roof of a distant building ("Fore!").

But those in real danger are the Used themselves, as they pound, bludgeon and thwack the car, often within inches of one another. The death blow is finally delivered by Big Deluxe Tattoos owner Rich D., who drives over what remains of the car with his Chevy Suburban.

"Hey, I'm bleeding!" Howard announces. Mercifully, the bassist's problem is not an ax wound but merely his new tattoos, which have begun to ooze in the wake of his exertions. Indeed, with a couple members of the band complaining of similar injuries, the Used head for a nearby coffeehouse to calm down over a nice game of chess. Actually, make that a not-so-nice game of chess, given that McCracken plays with the same psychotic enthusiasm with which he does everything else, at least until he is checkmated by Quinn ("You bitch!").

Coffee drunk, the band's wounds healed, we head back to the parking lot and wait for a tow truck to pick up what was formerly, in Howard's words, the Used's "very own thug-lovin' ride."

"You know what gets me," Allman says, staring at the destroyed automobile through the early-evening gloom. "At one time this was somebody's baby, all new and shining, straight off the lot."

Is that regret Blender hears in the guitarist's voice?

"No way," he chuckles. "This has been one of the funnest days I've ever had. Let's do it again! Tomorrow!" [BLENDER]

FROM THE USED	
THE USED	
Belt, Lela, DMC	
December 31, 2000	
Car	200.00
Shrimp	72.10
Big Deluxe Tattoos	200.00
Thrift Store	25.00
Sears	10.00
Coffee Garden	10.00
TOTAL	648.00

Alphonse Teymonde (still-life)



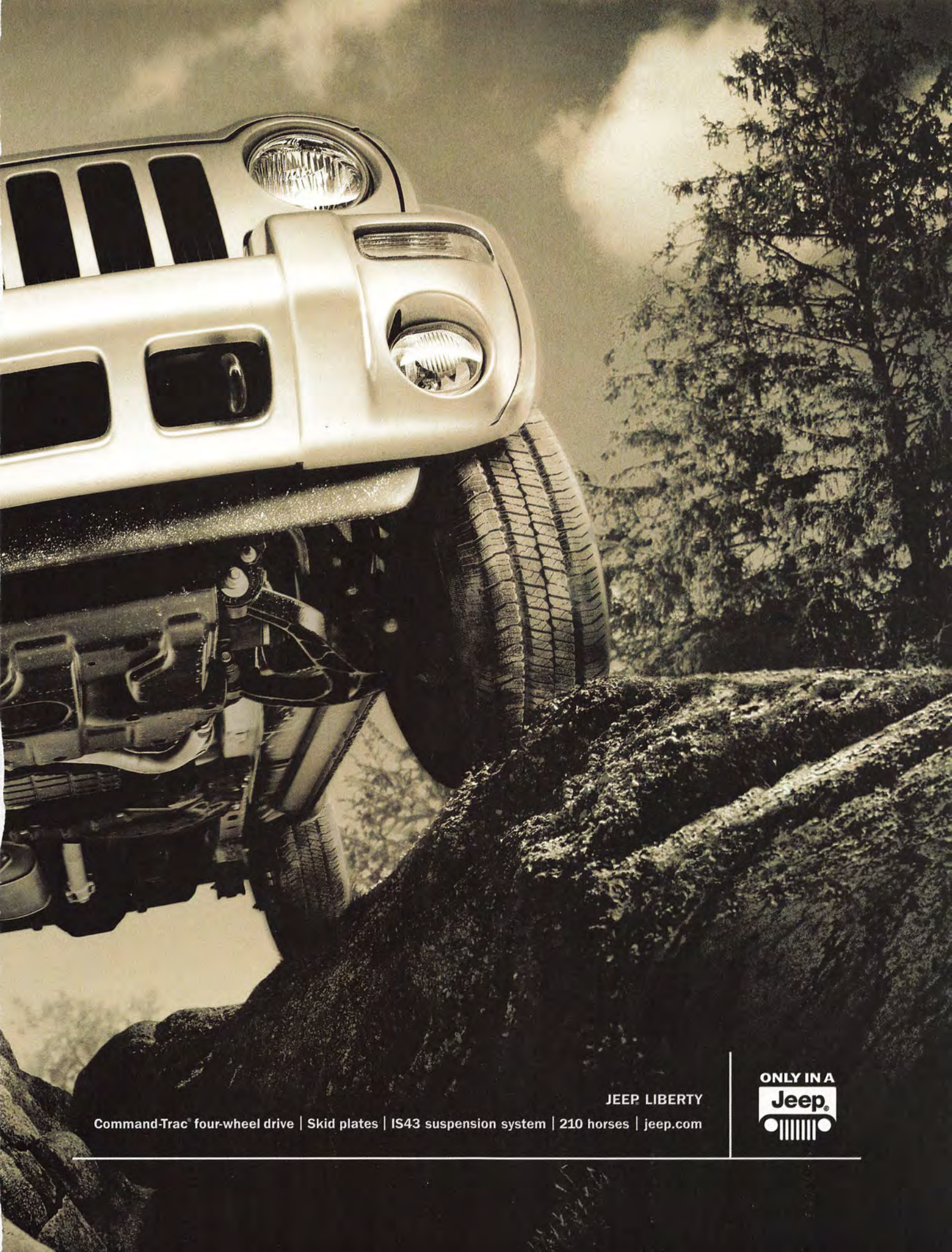
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The Rock Goddess

SO



The Sexiest Women in Music Today!



Some are demure. Some are dirty. And some are even drummers. But all of the stars featured in *Blender's* inaugural Rock Goddess 50 have that certain something that makes the world a nicer, sunnier and, above all, sexier place. Plus! A host of male stars tell us which rock goddesses they'd like to find backstage wearing nothing but a smile. . . .

BY JOHN AIZLEWOOD, ADRIAN DEEVOY,
NICK DUERDEN, ROB KEMP AND ROB TANNENBAUM

Rock God Confession



"We Need Her in America!"

Incubus's **Brandon Boyd** on the virtues of Kylie Minogue, a roomful of lesbians and Internet porn

You've just come offstage after a sold-out show. Which beautiful rock goddess would you most like to find backstage wearing nothing but a smile?

If we're in an alternate universe where I didn't know Carolyn [Murphy, Boyd's supermodel girlfriend], it would be Kylie Minogue. She's really sexy and unashamed pop, and we need her in America. The way she shows you her ass is not tacky at all.

Anybody else?

Shakira's music isn't my cup of tea, but the way she moves her hips reminds me of the feeling you get when you're climbing the gym pole in school.

When you were a young man, which female singer did you have the biggest crush on? When I was 16, I saw Ani DiFranco play at the Troubadour in Los Angeles. I thought she was incredible, but I also noticed that I was the only guy in the place. I thought I had died and gone to heaven, but then I realized they were all lesbians and wanted her. But it didn't matter. Being in a room full of women was so cool.

Would you pretend to like a pop star's new CD just to get inside her pants?

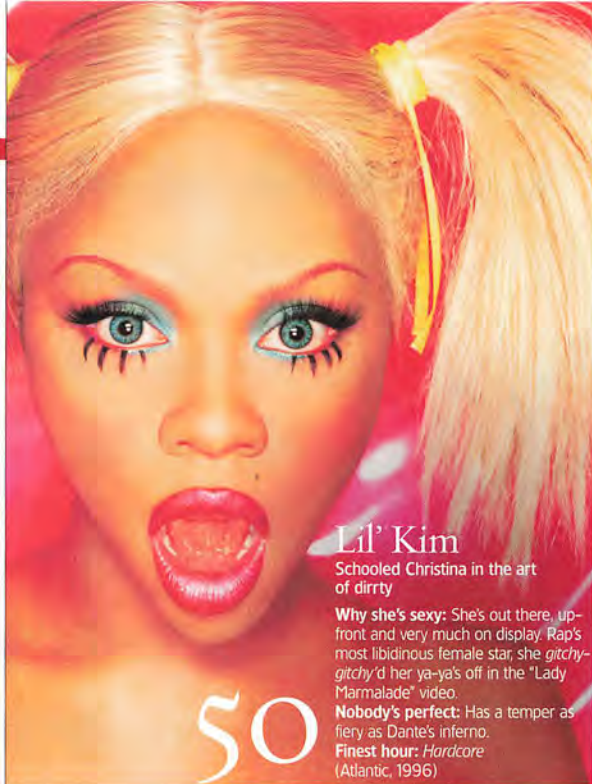
No. Maybe I sound like a dork, but if she's an aspiring pop star, I would — just to help her.

Have you ever made a fool of yourself in front of a rock goddess?

Not yet, but I'm sure one day I'll talk shit with my friends about some rock goddess, like, "God, that song sucks. What was she thinking?" and she'll be standing right there. I'm the kind of guy who gives away surprise parties.

Have you ever downloaded a picture of a female pop star?

Nope. But like all men, I do use the computer to check out Net porn. **ROB KEMP**



Lil' Kim

Schooled Christina in the art of dirty

Why she's sexy: She's out there, up-front and very much on display. Rap's most libidinous female star, she gitchy-gitchy'd her ya-ya's off in the "Lady Marmalade" video.

Nobody's perfect: Has a temper as fiery as Dante's inferno.

Finest hour: *Hardcore* (Atlantic, 1996)



48 Brody Armstrong

Ass-kicking Aussie

Why she's sexy: The Distillers' tattooed, mohawked singer looks and sounds as if she's descended from exiled British convicts. Picture her as the hottest, toughest babe in the Incurable Punk Chicks Correctional Facility.

Nobody's perfect: Watch it, pal: She's married to Rancid's Tim Armstrong. **Finest hour:** *Sing Sing Death House* (Hellcat/Epitaph, 2002)



45 Karen O

A vision in torn fishnets

Why she's sexy: The frontwoman for New York's Yeah Yeah Yeahs is scuzzy, full-throated and feral. You like to think that whatever goes on behind closed doors with her is strictly rated R.

Nobody's perfect: Her stained white tank-top suggests she doesn't wash as much as she should. **Finest hour:** *Machine EP* (Touch & Go, 2002)



47 Pink

So misunderstood

Why she's sexy: The bad girl of self-confessional rock, Pink disrobes for the camera because — get this — it upsets her boyfriend! Full-on and feisty, she's tattooed, pierced and very, very willful.

Nobody's perfect: High-maintenance, readers, high-maintenance: "I need to be fed and petted and washed." **Finest hour:** *M'sundaztood* (Arista, 2001)



44 Polly Harvey

Sex bomb for grad students

Why she's sexy: She's English country stock (her accent is the British equivalent of that of Omaha, Nebraska), yet she has the intellectual flair of a Parisian Left Banker. She sings like she's in the throes of ecstasy, and nobody in pop wears lipstick with more panache.

Nobody's perfect: How to put this? ... She's a bit on the bony side. **Finest hour:** *Rid of Me* (Island, 1993)



49 Jessica Simpson

Texas tornado

Why she's sexy: The 17-year-old sickly sweet Christian who made *Sweet Kisses* in 1999 is now pop's premier Texas belle: cascading hair, sometimes-there clothing and the toothy congeniality of a Dallas Cowboys cheerleader.

Nobody's perfect: Wed a not unhand-some member of 98 Degrees. Damn. **Finest hour:** *Sweet Kisses* (Columbia, 1999)



46 Chilli

Five-alarm Chilli

Why she's sexy: Rozonda "Chilli" Thomas was undoubtedly the "Sexy" one in TLC's *CrazySexyCool* conglomerate. Chilli's an up-front, independent woman, and her adult sexuality can bring out the man in any boy.

Nobody's perfect: She's God-fearin', so you'd probably have to marry her first. **Finest hour:** *CrazySexyCool* (LaFace, 1994)



43 Christina Milian

Disney girls are hot

Why she's sexy: She gets the "cute" vote, as befits a former Disney employee. But she's beginning to get her act together: losing the chubby cheeks, dancing like a siren and slowly turning into a potential Miss Cuban Descent.

Nobody's perfect: Distraction alert: She's a pal of Jennifer Lopez's. **Finest hour:** *Christina Milian* (Uptown/Universal, 2001)

Opening spread, from left: Mark Seliger/Corbis Outlines; Frank Ockenfels 3. This page: Anthony Mandler/Corbis Outlines; (Boyd); David LaChapelle/Corbis Outlines; (Pink); Scott Wynn/Corbis Outlines; (Chilli); J. Scott Wynn/Corbis Outlines; (Karen O); Robert Wyatt/Corbis Outlines; (Polly Harvey)



42 Sahara Hotnights

Swedes? Sweet!

Why they're sexy: Four barely legal, rampaging, lipstick-swapped who love distortion pedals, margaritas and the Ramones — plus, two of them, Jennie and Johanna Asplund, are sisters. **Nobody's perfect:** Snarky singer Maria Andersson is taken — she's dating the Hives' madman Howlin' Pelle Almqvist. **Finest hour:** *Jennie Bomb* (Jet Set, 2002)



40 Norah Jones

It's the quiet ones you have to watch

Why she's sexy: Like that of the world's huskiest receptionist, it's Jones's voice that reaches out to your previously untouchable parts. The soul-scouring eyes and bijou body don't hurt either. **Nobody's perfect:** Daughter of frisky star-fondler Ravi Shankar. At least she didn't inherit the beard. **Finest hour:** *Come Away With Me* (Blue Note, 2002)



37 Melissa Auf Der Maur

Because bass is the sexiest instrument

Why she's sexy: Auf Der Maur can handle the most demanding partners (Courtney Love, Billy Corgan) and survive with her pout (and what a pout!) intact. **Nobody's perfect:** She never returns our calls. **Finest hour:** *Hole, Celebrity Skin* (Geffen, 1998)



41 Shelby Lynne

A badass, but with a really great...

Why she's sexy: The just-been-had hair and the knowledge that she smokes more cigarettes and drinks more beer than you do. She can probably handle a tractor, too, for those who get excited by such skills. **Nobody's perfect:** Knows the dark side of life a bit too well. **Finest hour:** *I Am Shelby Lynne* (Mercury, 2000)



39 Toni Braxton

Real? Not real? Who cares!

Why she's sexy: Braxton declared bankruptcy in 1998 and had to surrender her Porsche and her Lexus. No matter: She looked like a million dollars, and she still has the most luscious hair in pop. Money isn't everything, you see. **Nobody's perfect:** The scientific composition of her breasts is still a matter of some conjecture. **Finest hour:** *Secrets* (LaFace, 1996)



38 Samantha Mumba

Janet Jackson with an Irish brogue

Why she's sexy: Her body is willowy — serpentine, even. But then she speaks, and out pours the broadest Dublin accent this side of the River Liffey. It's as if Bono has entered the body of Naomi Campbell (which we're sure he hasn't). **Nobody's perfect:** Limited dance moves. **Finest hour:** *Gotta Tell You* (Universal, 2000)



36 Dixie Chicks

Yee-haw!

Why they're sexy: There's singer Natalie Maines, the go-to time-girl nonpareil, flanked by statuesque sisters Martie Seidel and Emily Robison. Haters dubbed them the "country Space Girls," but millions quickly gleaned the truth: The Chicks play even better than they look. **Nobody's perfect:** Maines's bride-of-Frankenstein hairdo in the "Landslide" video frightens us. **Finest hour:** *Fly* (Monument/Columbia, 1999)

Rock God Confession



"I Flexed With Lil' Kim"

But for rap impresario **Baby Williams**, a.k.a. Baby, a.k.a. the #1 Stunna, it's J.Lo who really "bubbles his bubble"

You've just come offstage, and you're feeling manly and virile. Which music goddess would you most like to find backstage wearing nothing but a smile?



J.Lo: "Anyone got an Advil?"

J.Lo! She's bad, she's fly! I like everything about her. I like Lil' Kim too — I flexed with her.

When you were a young lad, which female singer did you have the biggest crush on?

Janet! I grew up watching her on *Good Times*. She

grew up through her videos, from "Nasty Boys" to "Love Will Never Do Without You." She has been through a lot, and she's still focused.

Ever had a dream about a rock goddess?

Nah, I try not to dream. I like to make a dream a reality. If I see something I like, I go for broke and get with it. Believe it — I play! I like everybody on your list — I'm after every last one of 'em.

Could you handle all of them at once?

Yup! What, there are about 50 of 'em? I'd do 'em all like I do it on TV.

Christina Aguilera's "dirty" makeover: Yea or nay?

Love it! If that's what bubbles her bubble, you've gotta respect it.

Do you think you could cope with the pressures of being a female pop star?

It's harder for women than men anywhere. A woman like J.Lo or Britney or Toni Braxton — there's a lot of weight on their backs. Women have to go to stylists — they're strong. I take my hat off to 'em.

Have you ever downloaded a picture of a female pop star?

Nah, I haven't. I don't fuck with them computers, man! **ROB KEMP**

35 Meg White

Give the drummer some

Why she's sexy: Although the portfolio of female drummers is slim, there's something uniquely arousing about the rhythmic woman. Add to this White's effortless cool, tight white jeans and little red vests, and she becomes by far the most attractive member of the incestuous Led Zeppelin.

Nobody's perfect: Why did she have to go in for all that "He ain't heavy, he's my brother" stuff?

Finest hour: The White Stripes' *White Blood Cells* (Third Man/V2, 2001)



Gwen Stefani:
What does
Gavin see in
her?



By the Numbers!

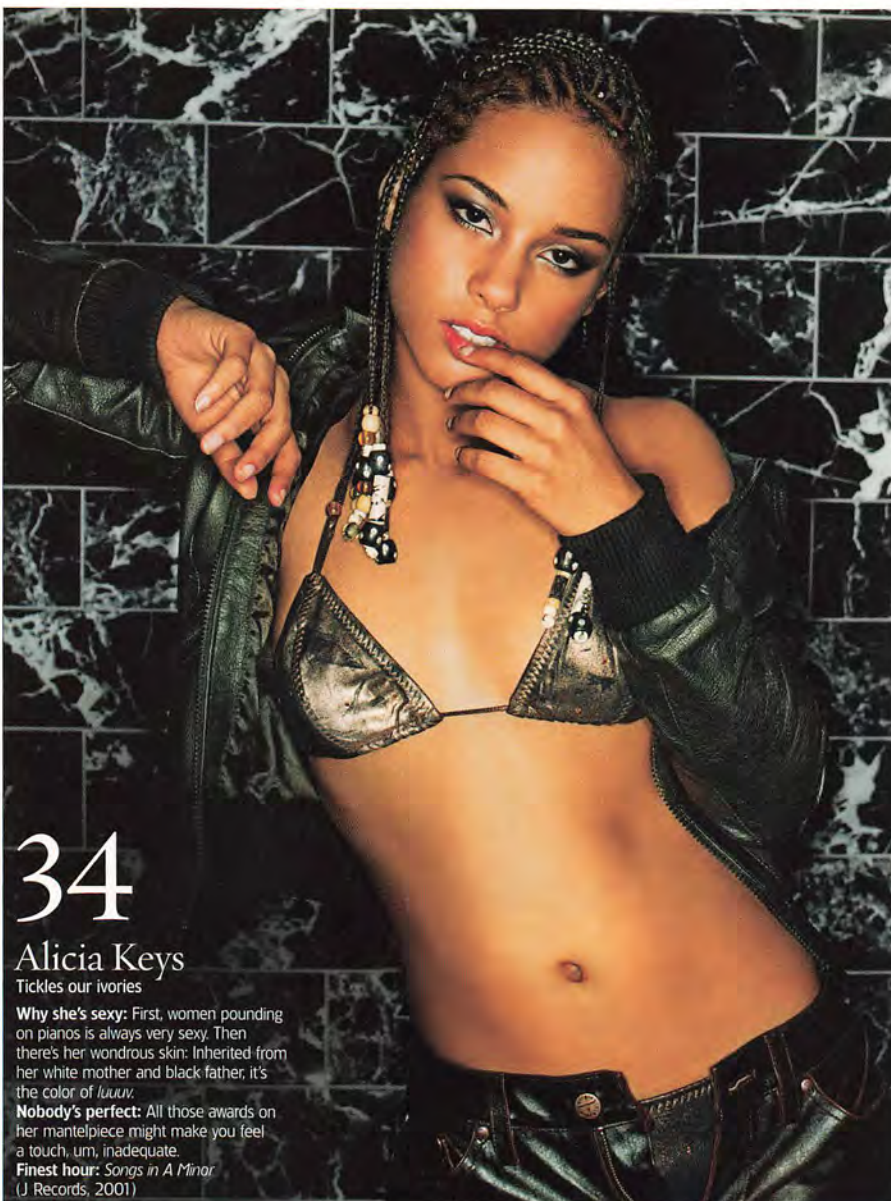
→ The Rock Goddess 50, crunched

- 27 Number who have been romantically linked with a male rock star
- 4 Number who have been romantically linked with Eminem
- 4 Number who have married or dated their dancers
- 25 Number of blondes (at press time)
- 14 Number who we're pretty sure have had some work done
- 10 Number who have appeared on *Oprah*
- 5 Number who have appeared on *Star Search*
- 12 Number of foreigners
- 2 Number of teenage Russian lesbians
- 4 Number reported to have feuded with Courtney Love
- 10 Number who have cosmetic- or hair care-product contracts
- 8 Number who have published books
- 1 Number who have published books in which they are shown having their naked boobies fondled by Vanilla Ice

HOW WE DID IT >>>>

The *Blender* staff listened to rock-goddess albums, compared the candidates' respective achievements and — yes — spent a possibly excessive amount of time staring at photographs of scantily clad pop vixens. Incredibly, this still counted as work.

If you think we left off the list someone who should have been included in the Rock Goddess 50 — or have any other problems with our selections — please write to us at *Blender*, 1040 Avenue of the Americas, 22nd floor, New York, New York 10018, or e-mail us at your2cents@blender.com.



34

Alicia Keys

Tickles our ivories

Why she's sexy: First, women pounding on pianos is always very sexy. Then there's her wondrous skin: Inherited from her white mother and black father, it's the color of *lulluv*.

Nobody's perfect: All those awards on her mantelpiece might make you feel a touch, um, inadequate.

Finest hour: *Songs in A Minor* (J Records, 2001)



33 3LW

Enjoy using foodstuffs in naughty ways

Why they're sexy: Like TLC with less clothing. They'll have food fights with you, albeit before dumping you. And, according to allegedly ousted member Naturi Naughton, they play the mack game, whatever that is.

Nobody's perfect: Warning: Boyfriends, just like band members, are always eminently replaceable.

Finest hour: *3LW* (Epic, 2000)



32 Lisa Marie Presley

You may have heard of her dad

Why she's sexy: There was a small part of every man that secretly harbored physical feelings for Elvis. Then God created the King in female form.

Nobody's perfect: Sexlessly mauled by Jacko in their revolting 1994 MTV kiss.

Finest hour: "Lights Out" CD single (Capitol, 2002)



31 Eve

Lucky tiger . . .

Why she's sexy: The bee-stung lips, the bootylicious backside, the bling-bling and the tiger paw print tattooed on each breast: The 23-year-old rapper-cum-movie actress is sassy, stylish, plenty talented and so feline she probably leaves scratch marks.

Nobody's perfect: She admits she has "fucked-up feet, fucked-up toes"

Finest hour: *Scorpion* (Interscope, 2001)



30

Courtney Love

Punk Cinderella

Why she's sexy: Ambitiously assembling Hollywood's top plastic surgeons, designers and makeup magicians, she transformed herself from punk ugly duckling into glam voluptuary. Plus, she's passionate and inherited a fortune. **Nobody's perfect:** There's a thin line between passionate and crazy. **Finest hour:** Hole, *Live Through This* (DGC, 1994)



29 Monica

Georgia peach

Why she's sexy: She first came to prominence alongside Brandy on "The Boy Is Mine," but Atlanta-born Monica is all grown up these days, a sophisticate with the voice of Whitney and the body of late-night Cinemax. **Nobody's perfect:** Her Internet detractors call her "Beaver Teeth." **Finest hour:** *The Boy Is Mine* (Arista, 2000)



28 T.A.T.U.

Jailbait Russian lesbians. Cool...

Why they're sexy: Two Russian teens who make out with each other — what part do you need explained? Lena Katina and Julia Volkova are the hottest Russkies since James Bond explored glasnost with Miss Onatopp. **Nobody's perfect:** Don't hold your breath for them to sing a cappella. **Finest hour:** 200 *KM/H in the Wrong Lane* (Interscope, 2002)



27 Brandy

Dandy!

Why she's sexy: She might wear the usual outlandish hooker's outfits, but sitcom star and R&B hottie Brandy Norwood has a spiritual air, a few thoughts about the world and music's most catlike neck. Plus, she just might want to sing to you. That would be nice. **Nobody's perfect:** Her manager-mom would never let you out of her sight. **Finest hour:** *Full Moon* (Atlantic, 2002)

Rock God Confession



"It Was Porno"

Guitar hero and Debbie Gibson fan **John Mayer** has strong feelings he'd like to share with you...

You've just come offstage after a sold-out show, and you're feeling manly and virile. Which rock goddess would you most like to find backstage wearing nothing but a smile? There's something about Mariah Carey — she's superhot, and people don't realize how much influence she's had. But I don't watch TV and think, "I want to be with them." I'd rather beat off in the shower to my schoolteacher from the second grade or whatever. It's just so much more possible.

When you were a young lad, which female singer did you have the biggest crush on? Debbie Gibson! Debbie Gibson's *Out of the Blue* is not only an LP, it's porno when you're young. Like the bra section of the JCPenney catalog. I remember the cover of *Out of the Blue* being fodder for some fantastic vacations.

Who's the sexiest pop star you've ever met? Jewel, absolutely. I wanted to do, uh, many things when I met Jewel.

Have you ever had a dream about a rock goddess?

Yes: J.Lo. And you know what? I never understood the J.Lo thing. I always found her kind of homogenized. But then I had a dream about her. It wasn't a sexual dream — it was one of those dreams where you wake up the next day and you're like [deep sigh], "I miss her." So I've had a little J.Lo crush lately.

You go out on a date with a famous female singer. Who picks up the check? I do.

Even if she's richer and more famous than you are?

Absolutely. I pretend that I have to take a piss and then sneak the credit card into the waiter's hand.

CLARK COLLIS



Debbie Gibson: Doggy style

Rock God Confession



"Girls Are Just Perfect"

The smart girl's rock crush, Coldplay's **Chris Martin**, likes his pop stars with extra-big... brains!

You've just come offstage after a sold-out show. Which rock goddess would you most like to find backstage wearing only a smile? I'm a sucker for any girl who can play music. I used to have a crush on Charlotte [Hatherley] of Ash. If someone's talented, you're naturally drawn to them.

When you were a young lad, which female singer did you have the biggest crush on? There was a British band called All About Eve whose singer, Julianne Regan, had the most beautiful voice in the world. And Toni Halliday from Curve and the singer from the Primitives.

Who's your all-time favorite rock goddess?

I think the sexiest female performer in the world is either Polly Harvey or Björk, because they're totally doing their own thing, and it's completely heart-felt and passionate. Sexy is somebody just doing her own thing — not necessarily silicone implants and curvy legs.



Björk says hi.

Have you ever had a dream about a rock goddess?

I can never remember dreams. But I know Polly Harvey pops up from time to time.

Do you think you could cope with the pressures of being a female pop star?

That's a good question. Because guys can just turn up and no one will comment on what we're wearing or how we look, but it's totally different for girls. And that would really piss me off. But then you get someone like Patti Smith, who basically doesn't give a shit, and people have a lot of respect for that. That makes her very sexy. In my mind, when God made women, he did an amazing job. I think girls are just perfect. *CLARK COLLIS*



26 The Donnas

Much prettier than the Ramones

Why they're sexy: Four tight-trousered rock chicks from Cali, they drink, smoke, stay up late and have appetites that, according to their 2001 song "40 Boys in 40 Nights," are insatiable. Sheesh! **Nobody's perfect:** If any females are likely to hold up a pinkie in front of a man's face, it's this bunch. **Finest hour:** *Spend the Night* (Atlantic, 2002)



24 Taryn Manning

Boomkitten

Why she's sexy: Because the budding actress (*8 Mile*)-cum-rock star (with Boomkat) has got the cute factor down pat: the fringe, the freckles and the just-legal insouciance. Plus, she makes Gap gear look arousing. **Nobody's perfect:** Tends to whine like a not-yet-legal teenager. **Finest hour:** Boomkat, *Boomkatalog One* (DreamWorks, 2003)



21 Nelly Furtado

Nothing like a bird

Why she's sexy: The charmingly wonky temptress of breezy dance-pop crossover, Furtado won hearts and loins when she memorably writhed in glossy mud for the four glorious minutes of her "Turn Off the Light" video. Whoa! **Nobody's perfect:** Daunting levels of near-bionic self-confidence. **Finest hour:** *Whoa, Nelly!* (DreamWorks, 2000)

25

Avril Lavigne

Teenage rampage

Why she's sexy: In truth, she's a tiny teenage tomboy: just the sort of girl to go skateboarding with, loiter around malls with, see System of a Down with and play Truth or Dare with. Obviously, she'd go for "dare." **Nobody's perfect:** Give her a few years, and we'll really see. **Finest hour:** *Let Go* (Arista, 2002)



23 Claudette Ortiz

The hip-hop Halle Berry

Why she's sexy: She looks like Halle Berry's sister, and she's only 20. The Puerto Rican singer with Fugees sound-alikes City High combines a smile revealing God's teeth with legs that extend way above the call of beauty. **Nobody's perfect:** She's too busy for a boyfriend. Instead, "I pray, I meditate." **Finest hour:** *City High*, *City High* (Interscope, 2001)



22 Natalie Imbruglia

Lying naked on the floor? Yes, please!

Why she's sexy: Because her doe-eyed gaze sends a liquid rush into the heart of every sensitive male; because she's pint-size and bunny-wabbit cute; and because she'll forever remain "Torn," waiting to be put back together again. **Nobody's perfect:** Her Australian accent is so mid-'90s. **Finest hour:** *Left of the Middle* (RCA, 1998)

20

Jennifer Love Hewitt

Blender love Hewitt, too

Why she's sexy: The 23-year-old superstarlet of both Hollywood and music is that most exquisite contradiction: an innocent-looking vamp. While the cheese of *Party of Five* still lingers, her hazel eyes — twin pistons of lust — suggest a serious seduction technique. **Nobody's perfect:** She doesn't drink, doesn't smoke and still lives with her mother. **Finest hour:** *BareNaked* (Jive, 2002)



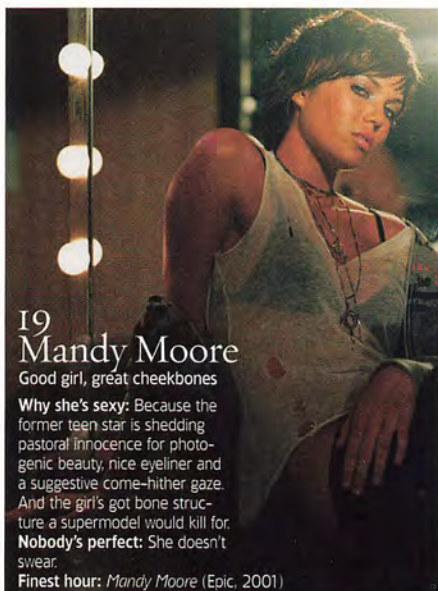
Jay Blakesberg/Retna Ltd. (The Donnas); Joe Fornaciari/Retna Ltd. (Lavigne); Kate Garner/Corbis Outline (Manning); Frank Ockenfels 3 (Ortiz); Sherry Neelds (Imbruglia); James White (Hewitt); Lynda Churilla/Corbis Outline (Manning); Richards/Phibos/Corbis Outline (Björk)

BED HEAD



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I9 Mandy Moore

Good girl, great cheekbones

Why she's sexy: Because the former teen star is shedding pastoral innocence for photogenic beauty, nice eyeliner and a suggestive come-hither gaze. And the girl's got bone structure a supermodel would kill for.

Nobody's perfect: She doesn't swear.

Finest hour: *Mandy Moore* (Epic, 2001)



I8 Janet Jackson

The finest abs in the world!

Why she's sexy: She's the mistress of reinvention. From frumpy teenage TV star to the goddess of today, she has been disco diva, dance queen and wayward eloper — and yet she's so shy, she refuses to dance in nightclubs. (And she still stands by that brother of hers.)

Nobody's perfect: And she still stands by that brother of hers.

Finest hour: *Control* (A&M, 1986)

I7 Ashanti

Long Island Lolita

Why she's sexy: She's the girl next door with a number 1 album and all the money in the world. Recently started coming out of her sexual shell to reveal a figure that looks great clad in just the rumor of a bikini — albeit a priceless rumor and a very expensive bikini.

Nobody's perfect: Regular collaborator Ja Rule is effectively her bodyguard.

Finest hour: *Ashanti* (Murder Inc./Def Jam, 2002)



I6 Mariah Carey

Check out the melismas on her!

Why she's sexy: True, she might appear to have just been sculpted by a surgeon, but the honey-voiced diva is undoubtedly a peach, with a hot-pants collection to rival J.Lo's. The figure is pure hourglass, and the eyes are those of Bambi. And who could ever resist Bambi?

Nobody's perfect: Has been known to be just a tad unstable.

Finest hour: *#1's* (Columbia, 1998)



I5 Jewel

An hourglass
Emily Dickinson

Why she's sexy: Sure, she wore a magnificent see-through dress to the 1997 Grammys. But she knows "stuff," having lived in a van for a while, hitchhiked her way through Mexico and dated real men, such as rodeo champ Ty Murray.

Nobody's perfect: She might insist on reading you some of her poetry.

Finest hour: *Pieces of You* (Atlantic, 1995)



I4 Sheryl Crow

Age cannot wither...

Why she's sexy: She rocks, she chugs brewskis, she'd probably beat you at arm-wrestling. Looks amazing at 40 and still bears the supersexy scars of her misspent youth. Also plays guitar properly (i.e., she doesn't look like a masseuse trying to give you a "happy ending").

Nobody's perfect: She once dated Eric Clapton.

Finest hour: *Sheryl Crow* (A&M, 1996)

I3 LeAnn Rimes

Double-dipping was never so much fun!

Why she's sexy: Recording tame country under the less-than-benign gaze of Pappy, she looked, well, homely. Come age 17, she sued Pa and overnight blossomed into the short-skirted jaw-dropper who made *Twisted Angel*. Rails were made for going off, after all. . . .

Nobody's perfect: That weekend at the in-laws' might not be a bowl of cherries. **Finest hour:** *Twisted Angel* (Curb, 2002)

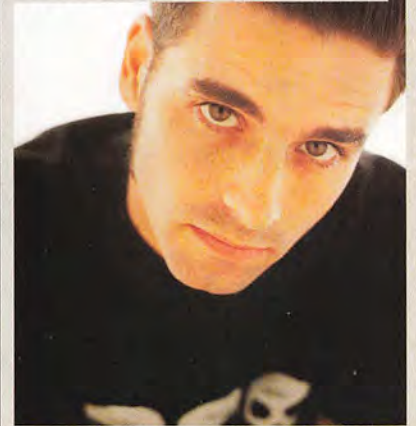


I2 Fiona Apple

Crazy, sexy and cool (did we mention crazy?)

Why she's sexy: Her idea of seduction is to analyze eroticism, quote Freud and then write a complicated song about it. Her "Criminal" video was the dirtiest thing ever in heavy rotation. **Nobody's perfect:** Obviously there won't be much talking about you. **Finest hour:** *When the Pawn* . . . (Clean Slate/Epic, 1999)

Rock God Confession



"My Mom Was Into Linda Ronstadt"

Emo pinup **Chris Carrabba** of Dashboard Confessional admits to a soft-rock childhood crush. Awww. . .

You've just come offstage after a sold-out show. Which rock goddess would you most like to find backstage wearing only a smile? I'm saying Pink. Although maybe she'd be wearing nothing but a scowl.

When you were a young lad, which female singer did you have the biggest crush on?

I really didn't listen to too many. I was into Fugazi and Minor Threat. But my mom was always into Linda Ronstadt, and I kind of dug her. She was a little before my time, but she was hot.

Have you ever had a dream about a rock goddess?

After the musical episode of *Buffy the Vampire*

Slayer, I had a dream about Sarah Michelle Gellar. I don't know whether that counts, but she was singing.

Christina Aguilera's "dirty" makeover: Yea or nay?

I guess you should be allowed to be who you are, even if that changes over time — if you decide you're from the streets you can turn your back on the Mickey Mouse Club, and no one will be the wiser.

Could you cope with the pressures of being a female pop star?

Yes, but I have an affinity for adversity.

You go out on a date with a famous female singer. Who picks up the check?

I assume she's doing better than me, so she should pick up the check. Unless, of course, it's the first date and I'm trying to impress her. But after that, she's on her own. *CLARK COLLIS*



Linda: Hippie chic

II

Paulina Rubio

Spookily self-assured Latina sex bomb

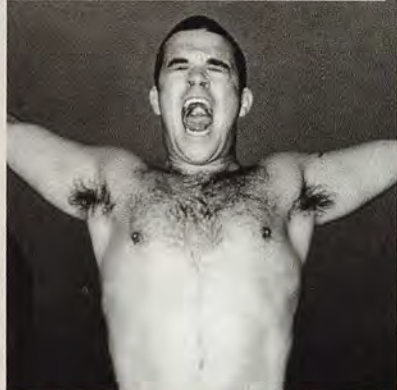
Why she's sexy: The 31-year-old Mexican superstar is a totem to the physical wonders of yoga and looks as comfortable in her tanned skin as she doubtless does between the sheets. Maturity, confidence and a midriff you could bounce quarters off.

Nobody's perfect: She talks like a Miss Universe contestant: "I want to be part of the whole world." **Urg.**

Finest hour: *Paulina Rubio* (Universal, 2002)



Rock God Confession



"She's Obviously Quite Mad!"

Is British pop stud **Robbie Williams** referring to J.Lo, Mariah, Christina... or all of the above?

You've just come offstage after a sold-out show. Which rock goddess would you most like to find backstage wearing only a smile? There is nobody. I've broken them all. I have. I'm moving on to men. Who would you?

Well, Mariah Carey is looking fit these days. Yeah, but you're barking up the bonkers tree, then. You're carrying the McBonkers torch to the stadium of mad. No, I'm after a wife now. I'm done shagging.

Is there someone who's your all-time favorite pop goddess?



Dusty Springfield: Now that's a beehive.

Dusty Springfield. *Dusty in Memphis* — you can't beat it.

Who's the sexiest pop star you've ever met? The thing is, they're not sexy. They're all really pretty, but to be in the game we're in, you've got to be hideously insecure and have hideous problems that you gained from birth. I think ambi-

tion makes you ugly. Same with actresses and models, although I'll no doubt end up marrying one.

Christina Aguilera's "dirrrty" makeover: Yea or nay?

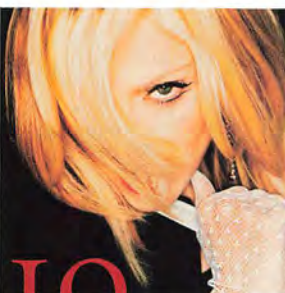
No. She's dirty and she needs a wash.

Would you pretend to like a pop star's new CD just to get inside her pants?

I've done that about five times. Ha ha ha! Have you heard that J.Lo song "Jenny From the Block"? I'm amazed by those lyrics. I love the song, but the lyrics... She's obviously a goddess, but she's obviously quite mad.

You go out on a date with a famous female singer. Who picks up the check?

I do. And then I'd get her record company to reimburse me. **CLARK COLLIS**



10

Madonna

Wrote the book (and appeared buck-naked in it, too)

Why she's sexy: The woman responsible for provoking more illicit thrills in music than anybody, ever. Powerful, yogic and — it must be said — in possession of a great set of hooters for age 44.

Nobody's perfect: Fewer acting skills than Elizabeth Berkley.

Finest hour: *The Immaculate Collection* (Sire, 1990)



9

Faith Hill

The original MILF

Why she's sexy: She's happily married, has three children and is as wholesome as milk. Yet look at — indeed, study — the dewy CD cover of *Cry*. The only sensible option is to be pathologically jealous of Mr. Hill, Tim McGraw.

Nobody's perfect: Beware: McGraw looks really tough.

Finest hour: *Cry* (Warner Bros. Nashville, 2002)



8

Shania Twain

World domination is hot!

Why she's sexy: She's toiled in fields, she's known poverty, but she scrubs up just beautifully. Often wears pants to cover what she regards as dumpy legs, but the "Man! I Feel Like a Woman!" video suggests she's being modest.

Nobody's perfect: Her husband is 127 years old.

Finest hour: *Come On Over* (Mercury, 1997)



7

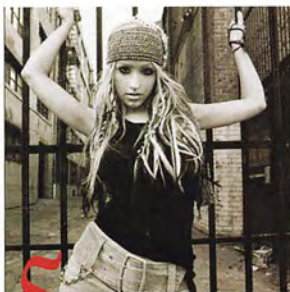
Beyoncé Knowles

Shagalicious!

Why she's sexy: The dazzling Ms. Knowles is a titan of sexual empowerment, an independent woman in thigh-high boots, corkscrew curls and a body the Amish would pray to.

Nobody's perfect: Jay-Z seems to have first dibs.

Finest hour: *Destiny's Child, Survivor* (Columbia, 2001)



5 Christina Aguilera

When Mouseketeers go bad

Why she's sexy: Once Britney Spears's more chaste kid sister, the mixx has now discovered raunch, tattoos, piercings and clothes designed for and by aliens. Oddly enough, it works, and her glow is distinctly post-coital.

Nobody's perfect: She might just get violent — and might just be an alien.

Finest hour: *Stripped* (RCA, 2002)



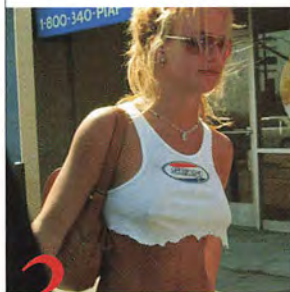
4 Gwen Stefani

Sexy? No Doubt!

Why she's sexy: Guys want to cherish her; girls want to hang out with her. The cute girl-next-door of yore reckons her stomach is too flabby (yeah, right), but she knows wearing high heels is all an already enticing woman needs.

Nobody's perfect: Two words: *Gavin* and *Rosendale*.

Finest hour: No Doubt, *Rock Steady* (Interscope, 2001)



3 Britney Spears

Not yet a woman? Nonsense, officer!

Why she's sexy: Her school uniform-and-pigtails routine transformed American men into drooling fools. Currently a leather-clad rock goddess who pronounces the word *slave* as though it tastes of honey.

Nobody's perfect: Still values her virginity above all else. Or does she? ...

Finest hour: *Oops! ... I Did It Again* (Jive, 2000)

6

Kylie Minogue

Can't get her out of your head

Why she's sexy: There may be only 60 and one-half inches of her, but what a skillfully constructed package. Bright, tight and pert in all the right places, she moves like a cougar and smiles like an angel. You could take her home to Mom, too (though maybe not to Dad).

Nobody's perfect: Dubious taste in men, including male model James Gooding and Pauly Shore.

Finest hour: *Fever* (Capitol, 2002)



2

Jennifer Lopez

Could you be Mr. Right IV?

Why she's sexy: Perhaps it's how she stayed close to her roots by filming the "I'm Gonna Be Alright" video in Spanish Harlem. Perhaps it's the elegance with which she curtsied to the queen of England. Or perhaps it's just that butt. ...

Nobody's perfect: Goes through husbands with alarming ease.

Finest hour: *This Is Me ... Then* (Epic, 2002)

The Sexiest Woman in Music Today

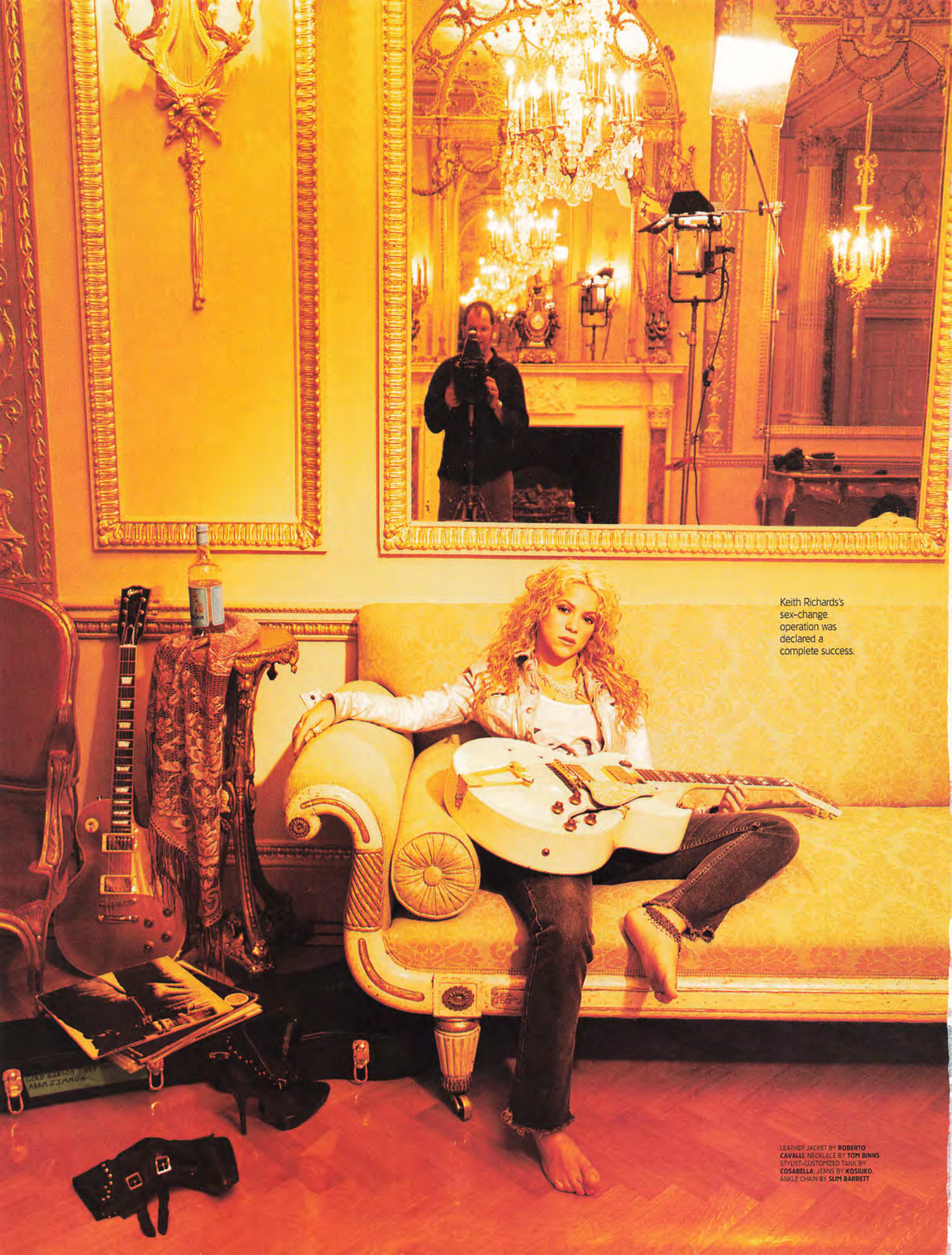
#1 Shakira

Singer. Guitarist. Drummer.
Geopolitical analyst. And 24-carat
hottie. No wonder Shakira is *Blender's*
Rock Goddess numero uno.

BY NICK DUERDEN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRANK OCKENFELS

Move along,
folks. Nothing
to see here.





Keith Richards's
sex-change
operation was
declared a
complete success.

LEATHER JACKET BY ROBERTO
CAVALLI; NECKLACE BY TOM BINNS
STYLISH-CUSTOMIZED TANK BY
COSABELLA; JEANS BY KOSIUKO
ANKLE CHAIN BY SLIM BARRETT

Hey, now that
you mention it,
she is kind of
good-looking.



S

HE CLEARS HER throat daintily, then speaks: "I feel like a horse that hasn't been castrated."

As opening gambits go, it's an unexpected one, but then Shakira, the part-Colombian, part-Lebanese singer who has conquered the world, is an altogether unexpected rock star.

Given that she became fluent in English only two years ago, and that she likes to employ florid metaphors whenever possible, maybe something has been lost in translation. This, after all, is the woman who once sang that her breasts were small and humble and thus wouldn't be confused with mountains, and the woman who, later today, will say she feels like a tree whose branches have crossed many territories. "I should be bearing fruit from my fingers," she will suggest, straight-faced and solemn. But no, she's quite adamant on this one: She really *does* feel like a big-testicled stud.

"The word in Spanish is *brio*," she says. "What is the English for *brio*?" The word in English is the same, *brio*, and it means vivacity, but she is looking for a very particular noun right now. She turns to her parents, her brother Antonio and anybody else in the room who has a knowledge of Spanish, but nobody can provide her with it.

"Ah, forget it, all of you," she says. "Anyway, it's the word for a male horse who hasn't been castrated. That is me — full of strength and very, very productive. I feel that this is the time in my life when I should go out into the world and achieve. I have so much enthusiasm and determination, and I should make the most of these feelings. Who knows? Maybe when I get older I won't have that enthusiasm anymore, so this is why I am making the most of my time right now."

She's certainly capitalizing on it: *Laundry Service*, her first English-language album, was released at the

beginning of 2002 and has sold more than 8 million copies worldwide — but she won't finish promoting it until halfway through 2003. "I have so much to . . . to impart," she says. Her chocolate-drop eyes are huge, her bright smile effusive. "You understand my meanings, yes?"

Her doting father, forever at her periphery, approaches, bearing gifts on a small plate. "Have a cashew nut," he says.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

SHAKIRA ISABEL Mebarak Ripoll is 25 years old and 4 feet, 11 inches tall. She used to be brunette but recently found blond in a bottle, liked it and now looks

astonishingly movie-star sexy. Offstage, however, she dresses down with remarkable aplomb. When *Blender* meets her for the first time at the airport in freezing Montreal — she is halfway through the North American leg of her Tour of the Mongoose — she is dressed in a shapeless black top several sizes too large and a pair of dirty, oil-stained jeans that look as if they're on loan from Tommy Lee. Her kiss-curls, meanwhile, are hidden beneath a big black hat, from which her brown eyes peer nervously like a rabbit's. As she walks through the departure lounge, only her entourage, her 19 pieces of luggage, an Air Canada official and a great, hulking bodyguard alert the passersby of her VIP credentials.

"I am a shy person," she explains, folding her legs into a Buddha-like pose in the first-class lounge, awaiting a flight to Toronto, "and I don't like to always be drawing attention to myself." →

**"I feel like a horse that
hasn't been castrated.
Full of strength!"**

★





Drivers wanted.® 

But when she steps onstage, something extraordinary happens. Barefoot but defiantly erect enough to break the magical five-foot barrier, she stands clad in a tiny T-shirt and a pair of leather hip-huggers that accentuate a hall-of-fame booty — think Mick Jagger's vintage rock & roll backside crossed, against all odds, with J.Lo's hip-hop tush. Shakira can shimmy and shake with the pliability of elastic, and when she belly dances during "Objection (Tango)" and, especially, the closing "Whenever, Wherever," which she does while balancing a lighted candelabra on her head, 12,000 Canadians descend into all-out frenzy. It's a remarkable sight. It is here, in concert, where Shakira reveals her many dimensions.

When she first came to the attention of an English-speaking audience, Colombia's second-biggest export was erroneously marketed as a Latin Britney Spears, a former teen star who could pirouette in a pair of hot pants while singing cheeky pop songs.

But when was the last time Spears — or, for that matter, any of the current crop of divas: Christina, J.Lo, Madonna, even — lectured about politics in the middle of a concert? Or played electric guitar, or thrashed out a rhythm on the drums? Or reinterpreted AC/DC's "Back in Black" as an anthem of unadulterated sleaze? Like her rock hero, Bono, Shakira has messages of peace, love and understanding she wishes to impart. Her songs



↑ Shakira always sped up toward the end of songs, but no one seemed to care.

are love songs, full of carnival celebration; the activist stuff — one slogan flashed up between numbers reads BITE THE NECK OF HATRED — can be taken or left as desired. She's not Rage Against the Machine, not just yet.

And then there is her voice. In addition to lending itself, Celine Dion-style, to imposing ballads, it can also belt out a rock chorus in the manner of a female

Axl Rose. Shakira, the belly dancer from heaven, might just be all things to all people. Toy manufacturer Mattel has announced plans to produce a Shakira doll; it will need to have a great many features to do the woman justice.

"There is a bridge between me and my new audience at the moment," she explains, "and I want to cross it. I want to show them who the real Shakira is. I want to inspire thoughts and ideas. Pop music is the most effective vehicle to reach the masses, and I have always seen myself in this kind of role — a messenger. This is why I touch on politics during the show."

The general view, she says, seems to be that pop stars should leave their political statements in their hotel rooms. But this is a view, like so many others, with which she disagrees. "I am a pop star, but I also have an opinion. I grew up in a country that has existed under the whip of violence for 40 years, so how can I not? You know, in my country, a 5-year-old kid knows not only of Disney and Mickey Mouse, but also of guerrillas and paramilitaries. You grow up with that kind of awareness, of what the world is really like."

She falls silent for a while but keeps one hand aloft to indicate that she has not finished talking just yet. Thirty-seven seconds tick slowly by. "To be political in my country doesn't mean that you want to run for the presidency. To be political simply means to have an opinion."

"A Colombian 5-year-old knows not only Mickey Mouse, but paramilitaries."



Renowned belly-dancing instructor Oreet Jehassi takes on the greatest challenge of her career — teaching Blender associate editor "Dancin' "

Dave Katz the four defining moves from Shakira's "Whenever, Wherever" video. And a one, and a two . . .



Oreet Jehassi: But can she do the hokey-pokey?

Oreet Presents Sharqui: The Bellydance Workout can be ordered at sharqui.com.

USEFUL TIPS FROM BLENDER!

How to Shake Your Ass Like Shakira >>>



1 THE SNAKE-ARM

INSTRUCTOR OREET SAYS
"Bend your knees, keep your torso still, straighten your head and move your arms in a wavelike motion."
DANCIN' DAVE SAYS
"Be the wave, Dave, be the wave. . . ."



2 THE UNDULATION

INSTRUCTOR OREET SAYS
"Kneel on your right knee and put your right butt on your right heel. Now, put all your weight on your right hand, put your left hand behind your head and undulate, chest first, pelvis last."
DANCIN' DAVE SAYS
"Where is this 'pelvis' thing you speak of?"



3 THE HIP SHIMMY

INSTRUCTOR OREET SAYS
"Move forward and back, hips moving side to side. This simulates a baby kicking in a mother's stomach — traditionally, it's done by women for women."
DANCIN' DAVE SAYS
"I was a little intimidated until I put on the leg warmers — then it felt strangely right."



4 THE BIG TWIST

INSTRUCTOR OREET SAYS
"Extend your arms as you stand at profile, and then twist your hips. Tighten your tummy. This is just an extension of a hip isolation — Shakira loves this!"
DANCIN' DAVE SAYS
"Oreet says I have raw talent, and if we fertilize it properly, a dancing machine will take root and grow."

SHAKIRA'S FAVORITE MOVE!

Recently, she has been thinking a lot about wars and leaders and the terrifying state the world is currently in. This is why her show includes video footage depicting George W. Bush and Saddam Hussein playing a deadly game of chess: an allegory in which, she informs us, the people of the world are the pawns.

"Every day on the news there are more killings. I worry about this. In the first world war, 9 million people were killed; the second world war, more than 40 million. I don't want to think about how many would die in the next one.

"It may sound old-fashioned, but I desperately want for world peace. So yes, I do want to see Iraq disarmed, but also China disarmed, Korea disarmed, America disarmed. We should strive toward the day when every country is disarmed. We need a resolution: All weapons of mass destruction should be destroyed, as well as biological warfare. The only guarantee we have to see that the world survives another millennium is to do this. Otherwise, we are all going straight to the — how do you say? — to the abyss." She shakes her head.

The title of her tour, she explains, refers to good versus evil. "The cobra is deadly, but the mongoose can overcome it. We all have the possibility to defeat prejudice and resentment in our lives. Fear is the thing that makes us attack, that makes us strike, but we must overcome it. We must."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

SHAKIRA WAS BORN in Barranquilla, a small port town on Colombia's Caribbean coast. She was the only child from her father's second marriage; in his first, he produced six sons and three daughters. She first sang publicly at age 4, wrote her first song at 8 and wooed a Sony record executive in a hotel lobby when she was 13. The next year, she released her first album, *Magia*, but like its successor, *Peligro*, it sank without a trace. By the time she was 15, she and her mother had moved to Bogotá, where she landed a role in the soap opera *El Oasis*. "I was a terrible actress," she says, laughing. Her third album, *Pies Descalzos*, finally gave her a hit, but it was her fourth, 1998's *Dónde Están Los Ladrones?*, that made her a star, selling more than 4 million copies across Central and South America.

By now, her hunger for world domination was growing, so she taught herself English by reading the dictionary and the poetry of Walt Whitman. She fired her then-manager, Emilio Estefan Jr. (Gloria Estefan's husband), and approached Freddie DeMann, who once managed Michael Jackson and Madonna.



STYLIST-CUSTOMIZED
TANK BY COSABELLA.
BRACELET BY TOM BINNS.
SHIRT BY LOST ART NYC.
JEANS BY KOSIUKO.
ANKLE CHAIN BY SLIM
BARRETT

Then she wrote and self-produced *Laundry Service*.

"I think I would be lying if I told you that I'm surprised by its success," she says coily. "I worked with God on this, and I never would have taken the risk of making an English-language album if I didn't have a feeling, an intuition, that things would work out well for me.

"I often look at who I am, and where I come from. I grew up in a small town speaking Spanish with a bag full of dreams, and then one day I traveled to the capital and started fighting for those dreams. And now here I am living out my wildest illusions, and I have reached more people than I ever thought possible." She breaks off and looks melodramatically into the distance. Shakira can deliver dramatic monologues with the best of

them. Somewhere, the producer for the soap in which she once starred is ruing the day he let her quit.

"Life has been very benevolent to me," she says. "People know and love me all over the world, and that makes me feel like a citizen of the entire planet. But ultimately, I dedicate my work to my country, Colombia. Number one, because I was born and raised there" — she now lives in Miami with her boyfriend, Antonio de la Rua, son of the former president of Argentina — "and number two, because they need reasons to smile and reasons to celebrate. They need good news. I feel such responsibility to my people; I think I am a motivation to them all. You know, sometimes I feel that I don't just carry my family on my shoulders, but also many thousands of people →

It won't play
itself, Shakira!

STYLIST: CUSTOMIZED TRENDS
BY COSABELLA, DRAHLEIGH
BY TOM BINNS, SHOOT
LOST ARE NYC, STYLING
KOSHIKO, ANKLE CHAIN BY
SLIM BARRETT

and all their hopes and dreams." She sighs and swoons. "I take this job very seriously indeed."

And yet, she confesses, "this job" is nothing but a game.

"It is a game, isn't it? We are like children, pop stars. We pose in front of the camera, we make videos, we get our hair and makeup done. It is like a little kid's game, so full of glitter. Sometimes I feel like a Barbie doll: so many interviews, endless photo sessions. But never mind; I am well trained. Just like a soldier does his duty, so I do mine."

In addition to her roles as Colombia's spiritual mentor and world polemicist, Shakira is also a siren, a red-hot sex symbol — the sexiest in the business, no less. You'd think that perhaps she would find such frivolity offensive given her concern about Earth's plight, but her sly smile suggests otherwise.

**"I would be lying if
I told you I'm surprised
by my success."**



"If a 25-year-old woman tells you she isn't flattered to be chosen as the sexiest woman in music and put on the cover of a magazine like *Blender*, then I'm sorry, but she is lying," she says. "Of course it's flattering. I cannot deny that. And it is something to tell my children. Especially when I am old and covered in cellulite, which will happen one day."

Despite her close approximation of physical perfection, Shakira has long suffered from a negative body image. She spent years peering at herself in the mirror, picking herself apart, wishing that her pert breasts were more pendulous.

"Some days I would look at my reflection and see garbage," she says sourly, "and I guess I was worried about the size of my breasts for a long time. But now I think I have finally reached an age where I have accepted myself for who I am. And anyway, a big butt is far more important in Latin culture."

Would she ever consider plastic surgery?

"I would never say I wouldn't drink from this water," she says, poetically, "because maybe one day I would. If after I had children my breasts didn't look good, then perhaps I would have something done to them. But also I think it could be a dangerous game — addictive, maybe. Who knows?"

In a roundabout way, we discuss Christina Aguilera's recent conversion to photogenic sex goddess.

"I think each person has the right to express themselves the way they wish," Shakira says diplomatically. "That's what I like about this country: the right to freedom. But for me, there is a fine line between being sensual and sexual. From the N to the X there are, like, 10 or 11 letters, a pretty long distance, and I want to stay on this side, close to the N."

"Also, I don't want the emphasis to be on sexy, because being a singer is so much more than that. I want to provoke thoughts, not simply lust. I don't want to sound cheesy, but I do feel it is important to relay such messages to the world."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

IT IS NOW 11 o'clock at night, backstage at Toronto's Air Canada Centre. As the final chords of "Whenever, Wherever" still ring out across a cheering crowd, Shakira has already fled the stage and been spirited into a waiting car. She is tired and she needs sleep. Her parents, who are always by her side, cosset her protectively. En route back to the hotel, she turns to *Blender*.

"I have been thinking about our conversation," she says, "and there is more I want to add, more I want to tell you. May we speak in the morning?"

But then morning comes, and with it a belated realization: Today is a day off. Shakira's mother wants a new fur coat, and the entire Mebarak clan is famously good at shopping. Plus, Shakira really wants to go to the movies. Any further philosophical musings with *Blender* have to be put on indefinite hold. *Harry Potter* is beckoning, and the blond pop goddess loves *Harry Potter*.

"I like the girl in it," she says, beaming. "She is so capable, so strong, and a control freak." The beam becomes incandescent. "Just like me." [BLENDER]

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- Chairman Gert Boyle

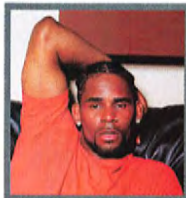
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**128****R. KELLY**

Pleading his innocence on a new, grown-up album

**156****STING/POLICE**

England's blond new-wave superstars: every CD rated

**166****KELLY OSBOURNE**

Her Ozzy-ish live debut



The Guide

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ICE CUBE

Four growling reissues from the mad dawg of gangsta rap, p148

An Innocent Man?

Chicago's indicted R&B sex machine pleads "not guilty" — on bended knee



R. KELLY'S GOT his kneepads on. On *Chocolate Factory*, the singer spends a whole album groveling, pleading his case before a jury composed of all womankind. On "Forever," Kelly drops to bended knee, proposing to his girl — but more often, he tells women to listen to him; he's sorry for what he's done; he hasn't done what they say he's done. "I appreciate every single one of you, and I promise from this day I will show respect," he vows on "Heart of a Woman." It's a long way from previous themes "Feelin' on Yo Booty" and "I Like the Crotch on You."

In the past, when Kelly sang similarly courtly lyrics, he seemed to be playing the choirboy — which he once was, as a child in Chicago. With the inspirational ballad "I Believe I Can Fly" elevating his career, Kelly's second, third and fourth albums have sold an incredible 18 million copies. But these days, he's praying for his career. Last June, shortly after the release of his underrated team-up with Jay-Z, *The Best of Both Worlds*, he faced some of the most damning legal charges ever filed against a superstar: a 21-count indictment for child pornography. Video and tour plans for *The Best of Both Worlds* were canceled; the album flopped.

Chicago police say they possess a tape of Kelly having sex with a girl who was 14 (technically, sex with post-pubescent minors isn't pedophilia, it's ephebophilia). Kelly's lawyers have said the man on the tape isn't him, and that

R. KELLY CHOCOLATE FACTORY

★★

JIVE

anyway, the girl was legal. Other tapes are rumored to exist, and there are allegations that in the principal one, Kelly urinates on the teenager. At least four lawsuits target him for alleged sex with underage girls; he has settled two out of court.

Last year, Kelly announced a November 5 release date for a new album, *Loveland*, but by May, street bootleggers were selling it for \$5. This leak forced Kelly to record a new album, though insiders claim he squelched *Loveland* because the lyrics offered unintended ironies in the wake of his arrest.

Give Kelly credit for putting together an apology that's straightforward and humble. If Trent Lott were this good at saying he's sorry, he'd still have a big office.

The first single, "Ignition," is full of racy auto-erotica jokes. "Have you ever driven a stick, babe?" he asks a girl. Maybe on the remix, he can pull her over and check her ID.

Elsewhere, though, Kelly replaces the gospel pop and Jeep beats of his hits with tunes that hark back to the soul music of Marvin Gaye and Al Green, summoning a grownup righteousness to wash away the tabloid sleaze. Until the last track, nothing on *Chocolate Factory* sounds like it was born in the '90s — hip-hop beats and attitude barely exist. This is pure meat and potatoes, and you can supply your own joke about tater tots.

The last song, "Been Around the World," is a duet with Ja Rule, and if the bass booms larger here as

Kelly boasts he's "a straight-up villain," it too feels like a soul song, with Rule all but sobbing over the unfair sex-tape gossip. Damn, that R. Kelly must be one smooth talker to make even Ja Rule so weepy.

Chocolate Factory also includes a five-song EP, *Loveland*, with songs from the aborted CD of the same name. The best of them, "Heaven, I Need a Hug," is Kelly's most straightforward response to his problems. It's everything the rest of the record isn't: extravagant, defensive and wonderfully bonkers.

"Heaven" starts out as a letter to Kelly's departed mother, then morphs into a conversation with God. He's a victim of player haters, Kelly declares, attacked because he's famous and because "I'm always trying to help people out." Memo to Kelly: When you're alleged to have pissed on a girl, it's not a good idea to ask God to "Shower down on me, wet me with your love." Just saying.

Kelly's a great singer who can summon Motown, dancehall reggae and church-choir voices, but this not-bad collection is almost a novelty record — a musical version of a press release or a spin-control interview with Diane Sawyer.

Will *Chocolate Factory* resuscitate Kelly's career? There's reason to think radio will be reluctant to associate with him, particularly when there aren't a lot of hits in the mix. Michael Jackson still makes fine records, but he can't get on the radio or MTV. Kelly's got a tough road ahead. The real question is, will he ever get a date again? *R.J. SMITH*

R. Kelly His life in CDs →

BORN INTO THE 90's

JIVE, 1992

★★★★

Up-tempo and cheeky, Kelly's debut is prime New Jack Swing. The languorous "Dedicated" foreshadows creamier jams and hit number 31, while Kelly's future bride Aaliyah (then 13) gets a naughty shout-out on "She's Got That Vibe."

12 PLAY

JIVE, 1993

★★★★

Sensuous synths and a painful of Astroglide massage deep grooves ("Your Body's Callin'") and sell nearly 7 million.



R. KELLY

JIVE, 1995

★★

A playa fumbling to get it up on an off day: Kelly likens his girl to a bank account on "You Remind Me of Something" (that'll get her hot, dude) and struggles to sound hungry over this unconvincing set of slow-jam snoozers.

R.

JIVE, 1998

★★★★

Riding P. Diddy's glitzy funk, the Grammy-winning Michael Jordan ode "I Believe I Can Fly" helps him to go platinum seven times over.



TP-2.COM

JIVE, 2000

★★★★

TP-2.com is filled with dramatic string sections, but its ridiculously horny come-ons border on self-satire: In a pattering falsetto, Kelly stretches the word *booty* into about 12 syllables on the typically subtle "Feelin' on Yo Booty."

R. KELLY AND JAY-Z: THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

JIVE/ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAM, 2002

★★★★

"Put two heads together, be mo' figures," Kelly predicts, but his legal controversies overshadow any chemistry, keeping these Superfriends from hitting major-league sales. *JONAH WEINER*

A full-body portrait of R. Kelly. He is wearing a white top hat, a white t-shirt, and white pants. He has a goatee and is wearing large, dark sunglasses. He is adorned with multiple pieces of jewelry: a large diamond cross necklace, a large diamond 'X' necklace, a watch on his left wrist, and a ring on his right hand. He is sitting with his hands clasped in front of him, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a solid, light blue color.

R. Kelly practices his
"innocent" look for
possible courtroom use.

➤ Kelly summons a grownup righteousness
to wash away the tabloid sleaze.

ALL-AMERICAN REJECTS

ALL-AMERICAN REJECTS ★

DREAMWORK'S

On their national debut, Oklahoma pop-punkers can't match their labelmates Jimmy Eat World

Aiming for the heartfelt sincerity of Dashboard Confessional and the hard-charging hooks of labelmates Jimmy Eat World, the All-American Rejects fall short of both. Singer Tyson Ritter's lyric sheet reads like a page discarded from Chris Carrabba's seventh-grade diary:

THE SCORE >>

★★★★★

EXCELLENT. A MUST-HAVE

★★★★

GREAT. CHECK IT OUT

★★★

VERY GOOD IN ITS GENRE

★★

JUST OK

★

WEAK

"Please speak slowly/My heart is learning/Teach me heartache/Stop this burning." The guy doesn't need salvation, he needs some Pepcid AC. And a better rhyming dictionary. As if lacking soul weren't bad enough, these songs also lack spine; anemic drum machine-produced beats undercut any visceral kick they might've had. The Rejects' name may be a good-natured attempt at preemptive self-mockery, but sadly for them, it ain't ironic if it's true.

JOSH EELLS

RICHARD ASHCROFT

HUMAN CONDITIONS ★★

VIRGIN

Ex-Verve frontman can't resuscitate career — or passion — with limp sophomore solo effort

"Happiness," Brit author Martin Amis has observed, "writes white." That problem has certainly bedeviled the career of Richard Ashcroft, who rose to U.K. prominence with the Verve thanks to achingly personal Britrock anthems about the death of his father ("The Drugs Don't Work" and their only U.S. hit, "Bittersweet Symphony") and estrangement from his wife ("History"). After the Verve split up in 1999, a period of marital bliss resulted in his bland solo debut, 2000's *Alone With Everybody*. For this follow-up, Ashcroft

contentedly casts an eye outward over other people's problems ("Buy It in Bottles," "God in the Numbers"), while turgid MOR rock surges expansively behind him. Sadly, good living has tilted his writing from surefooted and universal to numbing and platitudinous ("Life is dealing its hand!"), from "Check the Meaning"), while his stormy passions are becalmed by an overwhelming production job. Too happy by far.

ANDY PEMBERTON

ATOM AND HIS PACKAGE

ATTENTION! BLAH BLAH BLAH

★★★★

HOPELESS

Philly pop-metal doofus takes on Mideast tensions and Oedipal desire

Atom Goren calls his mother "my favorite person on the planet," and he's not being sarcastic. Bespectacled and doughy, he looks like a pudgy *Revenge of the Nerds* refugee, with the same mix of affability and prankishness. "Does Anyone Else in This Room Want to Marry His or Her Own Grandmother?" is sweet (and shows that his ardor extends up the family tree), while "The Palestinians Are Not the Same Thing as the Rebel Alliance, Jackass" disses confused activists. Goren's "package" is an assortment of keyboards that add dinky



All-American Rejects: "Spare 50 cents?"

drum beats and synth-pop ornaments to bravado guitar riffs. Though his whiny vocals do chafe, he taps the party-rock keg that Andrew W.K. chewed apart last year, and turns his in-jokes into animated sing-alongs.

JONAH WEINER

THE BAD PLUS

THESE ARE THE VISTAS

★★★★

COLUMBIA

Daring young jazz group dons flannel shirts, covers Nirvana

The Bad Plus are an acoustic jazz trio for the future: funny, imaginative and completely un beholden to the traditions of the music. The best evidence on their second album is a cover of "Smells Like

CUTE BOYS

One-hit Bostonians come back a bit stronger, and meaner as well

AMERICAN HI-FI THE ART OF LOSING ★★

ISLAND

>> ROCK IS, LIKE, so not dead. And its survival has little to do with those skinny-tie art-punk cuties grabbing all the credit. It's the journey-men who preserve rock — the guys (still mostly guys) who would be sweeping up surf-n'-skate shops, not running Dad's modeling agency, if that record deal hadn't come through.

Guys like the four vets of Boston's indie scene who make up American Hi-Fi.

The *Art of Losing*, American Hi-Fi's second release, demonstrates a much punchier sound in the wake of rock's latest surge. But what makes this record work is the same stuff that worked for bands like Green Day, even when they were living in a Britney-induced hell: a snotty singer wrapping his pipes around undeniable melodies, a guitarist happily jumping the line between arena rock and

garage punk, and a rhythm section that knows the joys of Jolt Cola.

Stacy Jones, AHF's leader, is a drummer by trade (he played in alt-rock contenders Vercu Salt and Letters to Cleo), and he's made sure his replacement on the stool, Brian Nolan, can hit with wit and precision. Jamie Arentzen adds color, but not too much complexity, on guitar, leaving Jones to do the snotty-singer thing, highlighted by the superbright production of Nick Launay (INXS, Semisonic).

STACY JONES'S
CURRENT LISTENING

THE JAM
THIS IS THE MODERN WORLD POLYDOR

THE MOVIE LIFE
THIS TIME NEXT YEAR REVELATION

With their marching beats and classic punk sing-along choruses, "Teenage Alien Nation" and "Built for Speed" force the head to bob. "Happy" shows a Bostonian's proper reverence for the Pixies, while "Nothing Left to Lose" plays with hip-hop tropes the way Big Audio Dynamite did with techno long ago on "The Globe."

Cute but not too sugary, smart but not too brainy, Jones's songs practically define pop-punk. Let's hope the bitterness toward women that runs through *The Art of Losing* is just temporary personal shit — Jones had that nice pro-girl hit, "Flavor of the Weak," on AHF's last CD — because this band, and this record, are the kind you just want to hug.

ANN POWERS



American Hi-Fi. Huge fans of glam-rock, obviously

Teen Spirit," which rocks a lot harder than any Krist Novoselic side project you can name. Pianist Ethan Iverson opens the track by stating Kurt Cobain's melody with stately grandeur; this might be the theme to *Hill Street Blues*. Then Reid Anderson enters, hurrying the bass line, and by the time drummer David King starts splashing cymbals everywhere, Iverson is piling one sour chord on top of another, on his way to building a frenzied and very "out" solo. The Bad Plus have some other pop moves — covers of Blondie's "Heart of Glass" and Aphex Twin's "Flim" — veering from loping and hummable one moment to avant-jazz clatter the next. They love to go slow then fast then slow again; maybe that's why they dig Nirvana.

JEFF SALAMON

BENZINO

REDEMPTION ★★

ELEKTRA

Rap-magazine head disses Eminem but can't knock out the king

As a member of the minor rap crews Almighty RSO and Made Men, *Source* magazine "CEO" Benzino had a bullying insistence on hardened thug-rap that never resonated beyond the streets. *Redemption* is his concession to club culture. Benzino still mixes in some gangsta riffs, but like all party albums, this one leans heavily on its producers (including Mario Winans), whose punchy, robust funk elevates the thumping sing-along "Rock the Party." Benzino's recruitment of superior guests (e.g., Jadakiss and Scarface) actually backfires by highlighting his own lyrical shortcomings. Except for one smart, scratching Eminem dis ("Pull Ya Skirt Up"), Benzino's a charisma-less, maundering vocalist — and that's something that no collection of hot beats can redeem.

JOSEPH PATEL

BIOHAZARD

KILL OR BE KILLED ★★★

SANCTUARY

Brooklyn hardcore metal pioneers extinguish rap crossover on their seventh album

Run-DMC and Aerosmith may have spearheaded the rap-rock revolution, but Brooklyn's Biohazard are equally responsible for the oversaturated nu-metal scene. The band emerged in the early '90s, combining hardcore punk rhythms with pugnacious hip-hop vocals, and fine-tuned the formula for

Hey, Blackstreet!
Get your feet off
the furniture!



years. But with their seventh album, *Kill or Be Killed*, Biohazard seem determined to slay the beast they rode in on. Brutal and uncompromising, the songs combine the down-tuned ferocity of Slayer with the chant-along refrains of late-'80s Anthrax. To mix things up, Biohazard toy with tribal rhythms and experimental feedback on "Heads Kicked In" and end "Hallowed Ground" with an ominous spoken-word passage that strings together their song titles in a vague threat of vengeance.

JON WIEDERHORN

BLACKSTREET

LEVEL II ★★

DREAMWORKS

After four years, the soul swash-bucklers reunite for some old tricks — very old tricks

Überproducer Teddy Riley, the father of New Jack Swing, was the last man to make the world care about Bobby Brown's records. After recent work for Michael Jackson and 'N Sync, he's rounded up his Blackstreet crew for their first album since 1999's *Finally*. But some of the aural flourishes here — Ohio Players samples, Simply Red riffs, vocoder vocals that evoke (yikes) Dazz — make it sound as though they've been away a lot longer. Aside from those quaint touches, it's Blackstreet business as usual: sweaty club workouts alternating with slow seductions. The production sparkles, from the staccato motif of "Brown Eyes" to the gyro-syncope of "Friend of Mine." But the songs are dull. That's an old Blackstreet pattern, too: Riley putting a bright shine on dross.

DAVID HILTBRAND

BLEU

REDHEAD ★★

AWAKE/COLUMBIA

Major-label debut from hirsute Boston singer-songwriter

Don't be fooled by his boho attire and occasional nods to such alt-rock gods as Green Day and the Foo Fighters:

William James McAuley III's tastes are firmly rooted in the kind of music that prevailed before punk. *Redhead* hurls forth as reference points Wings, Elton John, '70s-era Queen and ELO — and though most of the songs are suffused with an achingly postmodern wit, the recurrent wedging of tongue in cheek hardly redeems things. Bleu sounds like a refugee from the bright retro-pop of five years ago (think Ben Folds, Sonic, New Radicals). Compared to the angular, prickly mood that holds sway in the rest of indie-land, Bleu is as ancient as a bugle corps.

JOHN HARRIS

THE BLOOD BROTHERS

BURN PIANO ISLAND, BURN

★★★★

ARTISTDIRECT

Noise-rock vandals hailing from Seattle mix unnerving chaos with a dusting of melody

The Blood Brothers play turbulent noise-rock loaded with twisted tempos and drastic rhythm shifts. The band's third album is fueled by nuclear bursts of volume, nonsensical vocals by two brain-addled lyricists and the abrasive production of nu-metal architect Ross Robinson (Korn, Limp Bizkit). Amidst the



Bleu: "Welcome to my sauna. . ."

sonic bombast, less cacophonous touches provide eerie juxtapositions: "Every Breath Is a Bomb" has a delicate piano line and a mid-song reggae passage, and "Cecilia and the Silhouette Saloon" briefly interrupts sheer demolition with a soulful vocal harmony. Messy, jarring and strangely captivating, *Burn Piano Island*, *Burn* is the sound of deranged, attention-impaired youth with energy to spare.

JON WIEDERHORN

BLUEBIRD

HOT BLOOD ★★★

DIM MAK

Los Angeles madmen purvey gonzo retro rock thrills

When a record kicks off with a grimy guitar barrage and the line "I've got fire-breathing eyes with the future in sight," you know you're in for some gonzo fun. Like Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, Bluebird channel an impeccable record collection into satisfying, white-knuckle rock & roll. Guitarists Paul Figueroa and Barry Thomas are the stars, blasting from garage-rock rama-lama one minute to shifting Sonic Youth-style textures the next, so you hardly care that the lyrics are strictly of the "eyes"/"lies"/"dies" school. In an unashamed nod to their influences, Bluebird even persuade MC5 alumnus Wayne Kramer to man the frets on "Beautiful Believer." Are they willing to testify? Oh, yes.

DORIAN LYNSEY

TERRY BOZZIO AND BILLY SHEEHAN

NINE SHORT FILMS ★★★

MAGNA CARTA

Has-been rock show-offs invent a new middle-age career

Known mainly to musos and other obsessive readers of album credits, drummer Terry Bozzio and bassist Billy Sheehan are among the best in the business on their instruments. Bozzio has recorded with Frank Zappa, new-wave freaks Missing Persons and Duran Duran, while Sheehan's résumé includes stints with David Lee Roth and '80s metal balladeers Mr. Big. But →

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JOHN MAYER
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AWAKE/COLUMBIA

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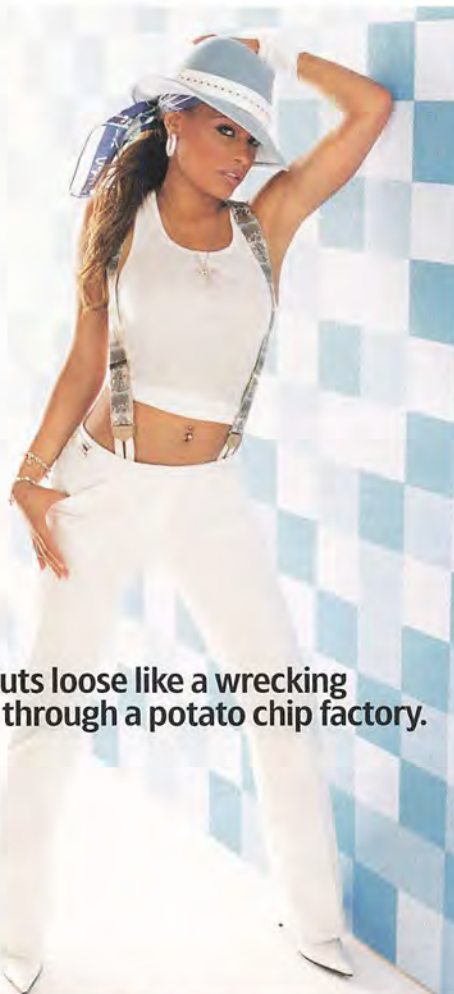
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Blu Cantrell
enjoys a game of
"elbow checkers."



> Cantrell cuts loose like a wrecking
ball through a potato chip factory.

COLORFUL

R&B songstress loves the sound of her voi-oi-oi-oice

BLU CANTRELL BITTERSWEET ★★

ARISTA

➤ IN THE TIME between Mariah Carey's 1990 debut and the premiere of *American Idol*, the talent-show vocal trick of melisma — you know: "And the ho-woe-woe-ome of the bra-yay-yaayve" — became a big, fat R&B cliché. Blu Cantrell, whose mother was a jazz singer, possesses an awesome, flashy voice: Her single "Hit 'Em Up Style (Oops!)" from 2001's debut, *So Blu*, was well-crafted, nasty fun, with Cantrell extracting revenge on her two-timing papa by maxing out his credit card.

This time it's her label that does the heavy spending, shelling out for high-profile cameos by Lauryn Hill, Missy Elliott and, best of all, dancehall phenom Sean Paul, who weighs in on "Breathe," the snazzy, tough-talking, Eminem-sampling first single.

Cantrell shows a deft feeling for jazzy singing, as she buoys "What For" with *doobie-dooie-doo* ad-libs. But then she cuts loose like a wrecking ball through a potato chip factory, and the results aren't pretty. "I'm an emotional individual; I must express my need," she declares on "Impatient," and express herself she does — all over the foyer, the pantry, the bedroom, and out the back door.

The grooves don't add up to an identifiable attitude — sometimes she's urban, while other times she's good-girl sophisticated. Cantrell needs to decide whether she's upscale-horny like Toni Braxton or more street and crazy like TLC. And she needs to stop overwhelming us with a wall of Blu. **RJ SMITH**

BLU CANTRELL'S CURRENT LISTENING

- LINKIN PARK
HYBRID THEORY WARNER BROS.
- KIM BURRELL
LIVE IN CONCERT TOMMY BOY

there's no evidence of mainstream pop experience (or dyed-blue hair) on this disc. Instead, the 10 tunes that make up *Nine Short Films* are wordy, complex prog-rock songs and soothingly atmospheric instrumentals. Bozzio's whisper-thin voice tends to leave the vocal numbers a little melody-deprived, but the playing — which is smart, slyly virtuosic and remarkably circumspect — more than makes up for that. A pleasant surprise.

J.D. CONSIDINE

DOYLE BRAMHALL

FITCHBURG STREET ★★

YEP-ROC

Stevie Ray Vaughan's old bandmate
returns with another dose of the same
old Texas blues

The opening of *Fitchburg Street*, by drummer and old Stevie Ray Vaughan collaborator Doyle Bramhall, sounds exactly like any number of recordings by Vaughan, which is surely the idea — spend time in Austin, Texas, SRV's hometown, and you'll see enough visiting pilgrims to prove that his cult is very much alive. When the vocals start, unfortunately, Bramhall comes off as a blander version of Vaughan (whose voice wasn't his selling point, anyway). If white Texas blues aren't dead, the proof isn't on this strong but too-nostalgic recording, which features only one Bramhall-penned tune ("Life by the Drop") among a slew of covers — and even that song was done better, over a decade ago, by you-know-who.

JOHN DEFORE

CHRIS BUTLER

THE MUSEUM OF ME ★★

FUTURE FOSSIL

Recording new songs with ye olde
equipment, ex-Waitresses leader
continues to Think Big

The creative force behind the Waitresses, the early-'80s new-wave band responsible for the raucously snotty "I Know What Boys Like," Hoboken, New Jersey, guitarist-auteur Chris Butler periodically surfaces with such oddities as "The Devil Glitch," the 69-minute, 500-verse track that earned him a place in the *Guinness Book of World Records* under "World's Longest Pop Song." (Longer even than "Whipping Post!") *The Museum of Me* is a virtual tour of the history of recording technology, with tracks recorded via everything from an Edison wax cylinder to a Rolling Stones Mobile unit. Whether he's making old-timey jug-band music ("Thinking About Them Girls") or giddy, panoramic string ballads ("The Idiot Trail"), Butler tries to match the medium to the message, and when it works — as it does on the sludgy "Swamp Boy" (done on a late-'40s tape recorder) and

the '60s surf memoir "Starved for Summer" — the results are just as good as the concept.

BILLY ALTMAN

CALLA

TELEWISE ★★★★★

ARENA ROCK

New York-cum-Texas trio revels in southern art-rock

Nearly all the songs on this Brooklyn-based trio's third album build slowly and finish strong, with cresting guitars and rumbling drums emerging only from long spells of languishing darkness. Calla's tension-filled deliberations are similar to the calibrated push-and-pull of Sigur Rós, but not nearly as pristine. They keep their Texas roots on display, sometimes in gritty, longer, melodic instrumentals ("As Quick as It Comes/Carrera") and sometimes in sleepy southern waltzes ("Monument"). Singer Aurelio Valle's whispered confessions carry a cynical (if not fatalistic) tone, but that only adds to this album's captivating, ghostly reward.

JOSEPH PATEL

CAT POWER

YOU ARE FREE ★★★★★

MATADOR

Neurotic indie-rock princess tries to salve her troubled soul but goes about it all wrong

In concert, hysterically shy Chan Marshall trembles at the edge of a nervous breakdown if someone in the crowd so much as lights a cigarette too loudly. Poring over lost loves and nightmares in a cathartic, injured Georgia twang, this singer-songwriter needs undivided attention — it's as if noise bruises her. Sadly, distracting over-embellishments dog her sixth album: On "Good Woman" and "Speak for Me," blues guitars fumble down meandering paths until violins, piano flutters and backup vocals creep in soppily. While "Shaking Paper" and "Maybe Not" feature churning, minimal accompaniment, studio affectations and polished chords mess things up elsewhere: One-dimensionally decorative, they snap us out of Marshall's haunted depths like so many concertgoers chatting on cell phones a few feet from the stage.

JONAH WEINER

CINDER

BREAK YOUR SILENCE ★★

GEFFEN

State-of-the-art complaint-rock that somehow struggles to ignite

Cinder hail from sun-mad Florida, yet, as current nü-rock demands, wear frowns as heavy as Seattle rain. Their pissed-yet-perky riff-o-rama has led to



The Coral: "Hold on, I'm the sax player!"

support slots with Creed and Sevendust in recent months, and *Break Your Silence* primes them for a crossover push. They've got plenty of muscle, with Stone Temple Pilots' Scott Weiland coproducing and various Creed, Puddle of Mudd and Papa Roach knob twiddlers fixing the mix. The title track (with Weiland on guest vocals) is pop-savvy, and "Soul Creation" packs both melody and hardcore crunch, but the rest — songs inspired by Columbine ("Ugly") and absent parents ("Daddy") — spout the usual teen angst. Predictable, prosaic... and probably platinum.

MICHAEL LEONARD

RY COODER/ MANUEL GALBÁN

MAMBO SINUENDO ★★★★★

NONESUCH/PERRO VERDE

This semi-Buena Vista Social Club reunion catches a bitchin' wave

Manuel Galbán isn't a member of the Buena Vista Social Club, but fans of the beloved Cuban group will know his name — he played guitar on recent solo records by Social Clubbers Ibrahim Ferrer, Omara Portuondo and Orlando "Cachaíto" López. His real renown,

though, was as guitarist for a group even more famous in Cuba: Los Zafiro, a '60s doo-wop quintet that, thanks to life in the fast lane, burned itself up quicker than one of Castro's cigars. This collaboration with virtuosic plucker (and Buena Vista archivist) Ry Cooder is a slow-motion six-string duel that's so heavy on surf-guitar reverb, you might want to don a wetsuit before listening. But *Mambo Sinuendo* isn't just a day at the beach. At once gorgeous, silly and haunting, it's also a sun-dappled wave, an oceanside frug and the sound of the undertow slowly pulling you under.

JEFF SALAMON

THE CORAL

THE CORAL ★★★★★

COLUMBIA

British debut could have altered the course of popular music if it weren't so damned zany

The Coral's U.K. breakthrough hit, "Dreaming of You," crosses the Beatles' "She's a Woman" with Motown, adds the cheesiest organ sound anyone's heard this century, a hilariously retro guitar solo and a fervent, hoarse lead vocal. Then it has the rare good sense to shut up after 140 seconds — but not before having delighted you to the marrow. Little else here, on which our six →

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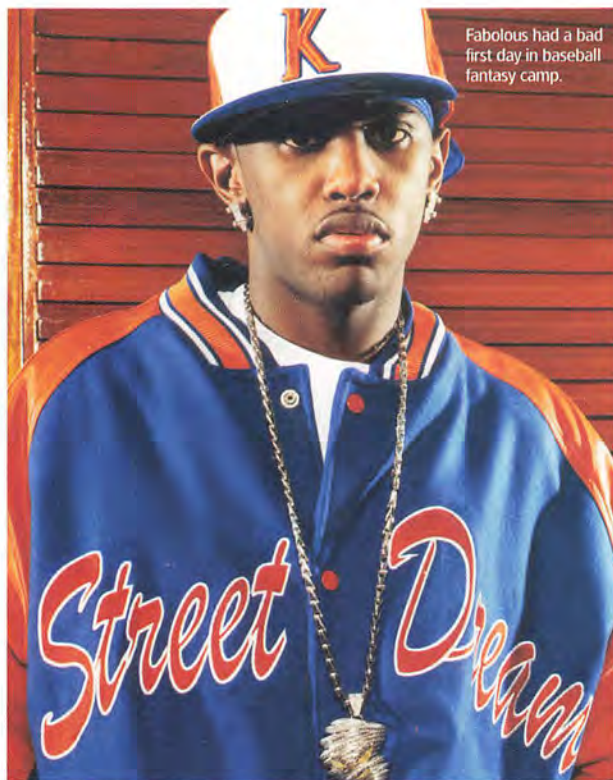


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THE GUIDE NEW RELEASES



Fabulous had a bad first day in baseball fantasy camp.

GOLD MEDAL

The crown prince of hip-hop with the Elvis sneer returns

FABOLOUS

STREET DREAMS ★★★★★

DESERT STORM/ELEKTRA

➤ IT'S HARD TO imagine any rapper beating Fabolous for Year's Best Oral Sex Line: In "Damn," he commands, "Swallow some kids, like that witch did/In Hansel and Gretel/Who's as handsome as Ghetto?" Invoking the Brothers Grimm in a bid for fellatio, this pretty boy is hip-hop's latest master of crass, leftfield metaphor.

On his 2001 debut, *Ghetto Fabolous*, a who's-who of A-list producers boosted Fab's off-color similes and colloquialisms, and turned his Glock- and Cristal-popping preoccupations into fun listening. Here, Fabolous assures fans that fame hasn't changed him — to prove it, he sticks defiantly to formula, hustling a string of synth-heavy, syncopated club jams.

On "Sickalicious," a digitally distorted guitar howls like a cat coughing up shards of aluminum as Missy Elliott belts the hook and deep piano jolts hammer out the beat. "To Not Give a Fuck" flaunts a hard, synthesized bass line and staccato rhythm produced by Rick Rock (who manned the G-funk of Fab's breakout, "I Can't Deny It").

Three songs by the Neptunes, the Midas superproducers responsible for his other hit, "Holla Back," were actually cut from this album, Desert Storm's CEO, Duro, told *Blender*, for being too "soft and sing-y." Crazy as this sounds, given the Neptunes' track record, the deletion was probably wise: Fabolous's relaxed delivery — reclining between P. Diddy's lobotomized monotone and Jay-Z's more limber chuckle — thrives on bouncy, high-energy accompaniment, like a narcoleptic addicted to caffeine.

The devotional soft rock of "Into You," featuring the sanguine Ashanti, is a misstep into slower tempo. Fab is no Ja Rule, and it's obvious that he's happier cataloguing one-night stands ("Call Me") than he is contemplating marriage. On the lead single, "This Is My Party," he makes his feelings about maturity clear: "I can do what I want now/Diplo immunity." At 23 years old, Fabolous is still a kid, suddenly famous and in no hurry to grow up. JONAH WEINER

FABOLOUS'S CURRENT LISTENING

JAY-Z
THE BLUEPRINT ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAM

50 CENT AND THE G-UNIT
THE FUTURE IS NOW BIG PINK PRESENTS

barely post-adolescent heroes from near Liverpool fleetingly impersonate everything from a glee club to anarchic acid eaters, is quite as glorious. But there are enough moments to suggest that, should they ever concentrate on, say, just 10 of their favorite styles, they could be fab.

JOHN MENDELSON

DIRTY THREE

SHE HAS NO STRINGS APOLLO ★★★

TOUCH AND GO

Violin-led Australians reclaim their inner beast

On the Dirty Three's raucous early records, Warren Ellis lurched and lunged with his violin like a drunk staggering home, while guitarist Mick Turner and drummer Jim White scribbled melancholy scenes behind him. Recent outings refined the formula: The trio's dramatic instrumentals grew less violent and more nuanced. Their sixth album recaptures the rough beauty of their younger years without sacrificing subtle charms. On the title track, Ellis's violin builds from tentative, delicate plucking to low, steady moaning before exploding in a cathartic howl. Turner consistently alternates rhythms with spare flashes of counter-melody, and White's drum rolls and crashing high-hats add vivid colors and details to a raw, passionate record.

DAVID PEISNER

BAXTER DURY

LEN PARROT'S MEMORIAL LIFT ★★★

ROUGH TRADE

Psychedelic chamber music from the son of a new-wave hero

Baxter Dury is one Xanax beyond mellow compared to his irrepressible father, Ian, a new-wave rocker who died of cancer in 2000. The 31-year-old singer-songwriter's unfunny falsetto and heavy-lidded balladry suggests Elliott Smith, or a Y-chromosome Beth Orton (Orton bandmate Henry Olsen guests, along with Portishead's Geoff Barrow and Adrian Utley). But when



Freeway, shortly after scalping an Amish man's beard

the songs simmer with breathy female backing vocals, disorienting organ/keyboard atmospheric and jazzy bass, the alchemy is more akin to Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks*. One exception: "Gingham Smalls," on which Baxter raises both voice and guitar amp for a pub-rock character sketch that may remind younger ears of Blur's "Parklife" but is more directly a nod to his wonderful dad.

JASON COHEN

ERASURE

OTHER PEOPLE'S SONGS ★★★

MUTE

British synth-pop duo surveys unusual influences on an album of cover songs

On Erasure's first American album in six years, singer Andy Bell throws his piercing falsetto into girl-group jewels from the '70s ("When Will I See You Again") and '60s ("Walking in the Rain"), and Erasure-izes "Goodnight," a lullaby from folkies Cliff Eberhardt and Buffy Saint-Marie. Bell's synth-pop partner, Vince Clarke, isn't as flexible, and although he pragmatically re-invents the Righteous Brothers' mid-'60s ballad "Ebb Tide" as a rippling disco number, his clunky arrangement of another Righteous oldie, "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'," seems better suited for karaoke. Originally conceived as a Bell solo album, *Other People's Songs* showcases the melodramatic but never overstated croon of a showman who, in another era, might've been a Las Vegas legend.

BARRY WALTERS

FREEWAY

PHILADELPHIA FREEWAY ★★

ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAM

Jay-Z's latest protégé MC from, yes, Philadelphia fails his rhyme emissions test with dull debut

"Staying alive in the 'hood today takes everything you got," rhymes Freeway,

paraphrasing the theme from *Cheers* on "You Don't Know" — an apt summation of the motif to his often-delayed debut, *Philadelphia Freeway*. A standard roughneck rhymers and one more subpar Jay-Z protégé, the bearded MC specializes in ghetto survival: Freeway trades ghetto-denizen war stories with Beanie Sigel and Jay-Z on the jumpy Just Blaze production "What We Do." A typically glaring line comes from an automobile metaphor — he's Freeway, get it? — as he chides a cheating female on the melancholy "Goodbye": "You let niggas pull their whip up and park in my spot/Put their pipe in your shaft while I was right in the lot." But failing to mine richer topics (his Sunni Muslim faith, for example), Freeway ultimately lacks direction.

MILES MARSHALL LEWIS

JEFFREY GAINES

TOWARD THE SUN ★★★

ARTEMIS

Singer-songwriter meets big-time producer; pair share secrets of enlightenment

Jeffrey Gaines is proof that the faithful sometimes get their due. Two years ago, a few radio DJs downloaded his fervent concert version of Peter Gabriel's "In Your Eyes" from Napster, and when other stations followed suit, the long-struggling singer-songwriter was quickly signed to a record deal. On his latest, the 36-year-old Pennsylvanian enlists producer Mitchell Froom, who has lent his artful clank to such acts as Cibo Matto and Suzanne Vega. Froom surrounds Gaines's gritty, soulful tenor with just enough backing guitars, piano and occasionally drums to keep the sentimental ballads moving. On "Over and Over," Gaines ups the tempo as he recalls a lost night of passion. But mostly he sings about love, hope and optimism with such earnestness, it's almost as though he's still covering Peter Gabriel.

JOHN DONOHUE

THE GO-BETWEENS

BRIGHT YELLOW, BRIGHT ORANGE ★★★

JETSET

Australia's pop brain trust offers another subtle gem

The Go-Betweens have been one of pop's open secrets for 20 years, making iridescent song-stories that top the charts in many a literate listener's perfect world. The Brisbane-based quartet, anchored by songwriters →

ASTONISHING FACT! >>

Trying to balance on a basketball, a young **FABOLOUS** fell and chipped a front tooth. He still won't get it capped.

BLENDER'S PROMOTIONAL SECTION

GUEST LIST

These guys are always "on the list"...



Rapper 50 Cent



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Casey Spooner's dandruff was way out of control.

GLITTERATI

New York's hottest new electro band comes on like Cher

FISCHERSPOONER

#1 ★

CAPITOL

IT'S DIFFICULT TO think of a band that epitomizes ultrahip Manhattan better than Fischerspooner. Feted by New York fashionistas and art-gallery owners, the duo is the leading light of electroclash, an NYC movement that updates '80s synth-pop with a dash of techno and a truckload of camp posturing. Their live shows feature costume changes, dancers and mimes (of both the lip syncing-to-backing tracks variety and, unfortunately, the I-am-pretending-to-walk-against-the-wind variety). Lead "singer" Casey Spooner is given to appearing onstage in makeup, a turban and a pair of sequined underpants. By comparison, Elton John looks like Ted Nugent.

Arch and knowing, more ironic than musical, FS is the sort of art-school project adored by trendy urbanites. How audiences in Des Moines will react remains to be seen. The omens, however, are not good.

Presumably noting England's lengthy tradition of camp synthesizer duos (Pet Shop Boys, Soft Cell), Fischerspooner launched their debut album in London last summer. It was met with poor sales and widespread

derision. At their second London show, one aggrieved patron expressed his disappointment by pelting Spooner with sandwiches. Their British label soon dropped them.

Bolstered by two new tracks, the U.S. version of #1 demonstrates a more fundamental problem: Busy with costume changes and art design, Fischerspooner (oops!) neglected to write any songs. The album's two memorable moments — the pulsating "Emerge" and a cover of Wire's "15th" — are vastly outweighed by monotonous sub-Kraftwerk pounding that's full of deadpan posturing.

It all suggests a fundamental misunderstanding of the New Romantic pop they adore, which had memorable choruses and nagging hooks in addition to blinding mascara. FS's schtick seems to involve nothing more than standing behind a synthesizer in a big hat, sucking your cheeks in and hoping for the best. As a result, #1 seems like a mass of stylish and expensive wrapping around an empty box. ALEXIS PETRIDIS

FISCHERSPOONER'S CURRENT LISTENING

► PINK FLOYD MEDDLE CAPITOL

► BELLE AND SEBASTIAN IF YOU'RE FEELING SINISTER MATORO

Robert Forster and Grant McClellan, almost-sorta broke through in the 1980s in the wake of R.E.M. (whom they influenced) but then split for solo careers. Now that they're on the comeback trail, they're wisely aiming for solid reprieve, not shiny fame. *Bright Yellow*, *Bright Orange* is a beautifully contained album, short in length and miniaturist in vision. Forster, known for jangly art suites, restrains himself gorgeously on life-slices like "In Her Diary," while McClellan gets extra-introspective without losing his gift for delicious melodies. Buy this one to share with your discriminating friends.

ANN POWERS

GRADE 8

GRADE 8 ★★★

LAVA/ATLANTIC

Angry young men blend metal, hardcore and self-help messages on boisterous debut

Three parts American to one part Swiss, grade 8 formed in Los Angeles after guitarist Dustin Tooker and his kid brother Ryan relocated from New Jersey in 1996. Fittingly, the group's sound is informed by both modern California metal (Rage Against the Machine, System of a Down) and old-school East Coast hardcore (Biohazard, Sick of It All). Dustin Tooker's spiky, fat-free songs are generic, but grade 8's ethos — barked out by Ryan on the self-explanatory "Deal With It" — makes for a refreshing change. "We didn't want to be another young band whining about their childhood," he explains. Amen.

PAUL ELLIOTT

GROOVE ARMADA

LOVEBOX ★★

JIVE

Elton John's favorite chill-out artists enlist Neneh Cherry and Richie Havens, set the time machine for 1995

Andy Cato and Tom Findlay gained celebrity fans and the admiration of ad directors everywhere with their 1999 album, *Vertigo*, which spiked commercial disco house with original ideas, including the drowsy, trombone-led down-tempo track "At the River." Similar inventiveness has been markedly absent from the London duo's subsequent work, and sadly, *Lovebox* continues the trend. Neneh Cherry's vocals are wasted on "Think Twice," which, like a lot of this record, mines a trip-hop style that now sounds horribly dated. Likewise, "Purple Haze" employs Kentucky rappers Nappy Roots, a guitar sample from Status Quo and snickering lyrics about pot and 'shrooms — and still winds up sounding just like an outtake from Fatboy Slim's *You've Come a Long Way, Baby*.

ALEXIS PETRIDIS

HALL & OATES

DO IT FOR LOVE ★★

U-WATCH

Once-huge pop duo has the right sound but the wrong decade

Usually, the most painful thing about listening to new material from a formerly popular band is noting just how far the mighty have fallen. That's not the case with Hall & Oates, who were sort of the 'N Sync of the late '70s. Even though 31 years have passed since the Philadelphia neosoul twosome released their first album, their singing remains as smooth as ever. Nor have they lost their ability to craft a hook: This album's title tune is as catchy as their 1984 chart-topper, "Out of Touch." The trouble is, it's not 1984 anymore, and not even the dance-club references sprinkled through "Miss DJ" can keep Darryl Hall and John Oates from seeming as dated as the male ponytail.

J.D. CONSIDINE

JOHN HAMMOND

READY FOR LOVE ★★

BACK PORCH

Veteran white bluesman digs more gold from others' mines, plus one nice nugget of his own

Despite wearing one of the record industry's most famous names (his father discovered Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen and Aretha Franklin — what'd yours do?), sexagenarian bluesman John Hammond was semi-obscure until *Wicked Grin*, his 2001 disc of Tom Waits covers. Hammond stays in that West Coast neighborhood on *Ready for Love*, produced by Los Lobos's David Hidalgo, whose junkyard cool is all over such highlights as "No Chance." The two Waits songs here are among the best (unlike two George Jones numbers that, though solid, are merely sore thumbs); Hammond's caramel voice doesn't have Waits's grit or grumble, but it's an expressive match for such standards as "Same Thing" and "Comes Love." The surprise here is "Crown Vic," the first original tune Hammond has recorded. It fits snugly among these relaxed, happily run-down blues.

JOHN DEFORE

ANTHONY MICHAEL HALL
ON USA NETWORK'S THE DEAD ZONE

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INTERSCOPE

"I turn it up on the way to work and listen to it during breaks on the set. 'When I Get Free' gets me in a good mood."

JENNIFER HANSON

JENNIFER HANSON ★★

CAPITOL NASHVILLE

**Good-looking student of the '70s
revives the art of country-rock**

Jennifer Hanson is a willowy 29-year-old Nashville looker whose voice has a stringy lusciousness. She grew up unrich in L.A., subsisting chiefly on country-rock records — Bonnie Raitt, Linda Ronstadt, Little Feat — and that rich diet elevates this uncommonly swift, sexy debut of her similarly written tunes. The album represents a sly coalescence of guitar and songwriting and singing skills, all conveyed by a sensuous southern immersion in craft. Nothing is forced: On "All Those Yesterdays," about time and identity, and "Travis," about a lost guy, Hanson's melodies touch fanciness — yet in the alert, laid-back grooves of "Beautiful Goodbye" and "Just One of Those Days," the music coheres so subtly that her grandeur sneaks up on you.

JAMES HUNTER

JOE JACKSON BAND

VOLUME 4 ★★

RESTLESS/RYKODISC

**Back to four-piece basics for this
jazz-flirting, Costello-lite maestro**

Even in his late-'70s prime, with the jumpy, sour hits "Is She Really Going Out With Him?" and "It's Different for Girls," Joe Jackson was overshadowed by his British superior Elvis Costello, the

ASTONISHING FACT! >>

While in his twenties, **DANIEL JOHNSTON** was a carry performer. He spent time touring with a traveling Texas road show.

What nice wrists you
have, Jennifer Hanson.



Kazzer tries to look cool after losing car keys.

master of new-wave misanthropy. At 48, Jackson has reassembled the four-piece band he left behind in 1980 to explore soundtrack sophistication and jazz arranging, and his high, pinched tenor is as intact as his themes. These 11 grouchy or wistful tracks, high on songcraft, offer more social satire, reflections on gender roles and Beatlesque drum rolls. A mature twist distinguishes the sympathetic "Awkward Age," on which Jackson identifies with a scowling teenage "Klingon beauty queen" and announces that he hates parties " 'cause I'm shy." He's still the most sensitive of original punks.

MAT SNOW

DANIEL JOHNSTON/ MARK LINKOUS

FEAR YOURSELF ★★

GAMMON

**Laughing Madcap and Space Cowboy
wonder why girls don't love them**

For those who follow despair as though it's a sports team, this indie-rock match

is the greatest teaming since Lennon and McCartney. Two lo-fidelity all-stars — Daniel Johnston, endearingly quirky, manic-depressive singer-songwriter, and Mark Linkous, frontman for spooky space-folkies Sparklehorse — link their pathologies for *Fear Yourself*, a raw meditation on unrequited love. Sonically, it's all Linkous: double-tracked vocals, moaning cellos and woozy atmospherics. But it's Johnston who shines like a crazy diamond, warping classic pop structures to accommodate his own fucked-up sensibility (e.g., borrowing the chords from "Hotel California" and comparing sunsets to atom bombs) and baring his heart with unbridled honesty. It's sad, pretty, funny and touching.

JOSH EELLS

KAZZER

GO FOR BROKE ★★

EPIC

**Rap-rockers from Canada mixes hard
guitars with history's most ridiculous
reggae accent**

Canada has given the world plenty of goofy metal acts and lucid songwriters, but the country's rappers would likely lose a freestyle battle against those of even Albania or Singapore. Ontario rapper Kazzer isn't likely to change that. On *Go for Broke*, the 25-year-old blends old-school boasts and beats with tired acoustic rock and metal rhythms redolent of Uncle Kracker and Crazytown. Hardly a compliment. On the upside, Kazzer has a knack for production, and when he cranks the guitars on "Pedal to the Metal" and "Throwin' It Down," he approaches the intensity of Kid Rock. But his lyrics are pretty insufferable, and on "Puddem' Up," he shows there's no sound as ridiculous as a white Canuck who busts out a Jamaican patois.

JON WIEDERHORN

KILLER MIKE

MONSTER ★★

AQUEMINI/COLUMBIA

**Outkast protégé furthers the
Dirty South tradition with a beastly
but catchy debut**

Killer Mike cut his teeth as a ferocious battle rapper in Atlanta and made his debut guesting on Outkast tracks, and his divided lineage shows: *Monster* is half DMX-style gruff and half pop-funk minimalism, doled out in tantalizingly short bursts of spitfire verse and candy hooks. Barking "I'm the monster, I'm your sick and twisted monster" one minute and crooning a Prince-like "All day I dream about sex" the next, he is two MCs in one: the lover and the basher. On the stomper "AKshon (Yeah!)," produced by Outkast associate Earthtone III, Mike compares sex to a →

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shooting match ("Cock loaded, bust like a gun"), a common rap idea — but rarely has bashing been so catchy.

BEN SISARIO

KING CRIMSON

THE POWER TO BELIEVE ★★★

SANCTUARY

A major influence on Tool plays songs so complex, not even Yes can understand 'em

Robert Fripp, the argumentative guitarist who plays while sitting on a stool, bristles when the music of the band he's led for 34 years is described as progressive rock. Don't tell him, but King Crimson is the most innovative, vicious — indeed, the best — prog-rock outfit ever. Crimson's current incarnation combines the sounds of previous editions, especially the early math-rock of the mid-'70s and the deft, Talking Heads-redolent Ph.D.-funk of the early '80s. Melody is foreign to King Crimson's complexity, and *The Power to Believe* is highlighted by instrumentals: On "Elektrik" and "Level Five," Fripp and singer Adrian Belew intertwine guitar lines in a latticework as intricate as a Fabergé egg. The lowlight is Belew's weedy editorial against corporate greed in "Facts of Life."

ROB KEMP



Sonny Landreth gives his own guitar the finger.

measured guitar burn with bone-rattling explosions, and roll mesmerizing tension into colossal release. "Sema-phore" vibrates to life slowly, all tremolo and constriction, before hammering down a massive guitar riff, and "Schedule for Using Pillows and Beanbags" cycles between feedback, hypnosis and thunder for 12 minutes.

JOE GROSS

SONNY LANDRETH

THE ROAD WE'RE ON ★★★

SUGAR HILL

The "slydeco" king from Louisiana gets the blues

The music of Louisiana has never been accused of having too few influences, but the state's musical gumbo is rarely as energetic as this driving new hybrid from slide-guitar hero Sonny Landreth. On *The Road We're On*, the former John Hiatt guitarist flirts more with the blues than normal, from the stripped-down opening track, "True Blue," to the ballsy Texas "power shuffle" of "All About You." Landreth's thin tenor bends like a reed, a perfect partner for the solid, ringing tone of his National guitar, and if this feels more like a superbly recorded jam session than a studio album, it has a compelling, swampy throb.

JOHN DEFORE

KINSKI

AIRS ABOVE YOUR STATION ★★★

SUB POP

Post-rock quartet generates sprawling electronic jams

Though they're from Seattle, Kinski are so German, they ought to have an umlaut in their name. Their instrumental music echoes the circular riffs in 1970s Krautrock, the jammy music of man-

size bongs and infinite grooves, and the band even named itself for German actor/maniac Klaus Kinski. But because they're American, they add an epic rock scale, which made them a sleeper hit at 2002's South by Southwest festival. On their third full-length, they follow

ASTONISHING FACT! >>

In more than 30 years, KING CRIMSON's Robert Fripp has played standing up only once: on May 26, 1995, in Buffalo.

SNOOZY!

England's premier mood music-makers fall asleep

MASSIVE ATTACK

100TH WINDOW ★★★

VIRGIN

>>> MASSIVE ATTACK'S recording career has resembled an exploding rocket. After the initial, powerful blast of 1991's groundbreaking *Blue Lines* — which inspired a decade of imitators from Portishead to Beth Orton — the Bristol, England, crew leisurely made two more albums, each adhering to their moody trip-hop matrix, each a bit less compelling than the last. *100th Window*, their fourth, suggests Massive Attack are running dangerously low on rocket fuel.

Tricky, the weeded rapper who put menace in their mood, left after two records, and then cofounder Mushroom quit after 1998's *Mezzanine*. Now Daddy Gee has taken a "holiday," leaving 3D the only original member.

Naturally, *100th Window* is elegant. Sinéad O'Connor adds ghostly passion to the single "Special Cases" and the vaguely righteous "A Prayer for England," while reggae singer Horace Andy's ethereal vocals enhance

"Everywhen" and "Name Taken." Satisfyingly twangy guitars and Arabic strings entwine on the gently ominous "Butterfly Caught." All the surfaces are exquisitely tasteful, all the string arrangements achingly melancholic.

But there are no tunes, certainly nothing as bewitching as *Mezzanine*'s "Teardrop." Rap-free and more ambient than ever, Massive Attack have plumped for — break out the wind chimes! — mood music.

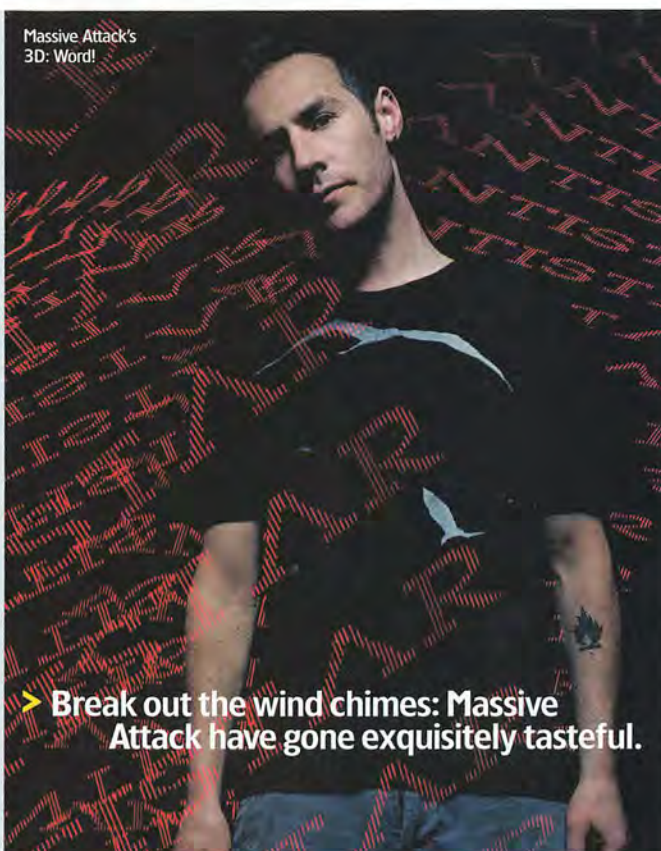
With 3D's mumbled singing and washes of New Age strings, it's difficult to spot where one song ends and another begins. By the second part of the 22-minute "Antistar," a low synth gurgles at length. Is the CD still playing? Who knows? Who cares? If Massive Attack continue on this trajectory, they may float so far into space the naked eye will no longer be able to make them out. ANDY PEMBERTON

3D'S CURRENT LISTENING

GABRIEL FAURÉ
REQUIEM ARTE NOVA

BETH GIBBONS
OUT OF SEASON GO BEAT

Massive Attack's 3D: Word!



> Break out the wind chimes: Massive Attack have gone exquisitely tasteful.

From top: Jim McCarthy/Retna Ltd., Warren Du Preez/Nick Thornton Jones/Cris Levine



Lyle Lovett: Actually, maybe you shouldn't say cheese.

LOOSE FUR

LOOSE FUR ★★★

DRAG CITY

Wilco's Jeff Tweedy and Glenn Kotche plus post-rock MVP Jim O'Rourke — it's an indie CS&N!

It was inevitable that professional outsiders Jeff Tweedy and Jim O'Rourke would craft an album together — O'Rourke mixed Wilco's last, doom-laden album, *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, while Tweedy added guitars to O'Rourke's uncharacteristically rocking *Insignificance*. The sound of the collaboration was probably inevitable too — a bit of O'Rourke's free-form sensibility and bizarre orchestrations rubbing against Tweedy's maudlin vocals and Gram Parsons infatuation. Six long songs, *Loose Fur* is sweet with alt-country melancholy. "So Long" is a pastoral tale of lost love beginning with a simple guitar refrain that builds to a gorgeous, Sonic Youth-style climax of ever-swelling guitars. The distrust of all humanity expressed in "Elegant Transaction" (sung, of course, by the dour O'Rourke) is offset by a delightful, unbalanced country beat. *Loose Fur* is fun, even if it is exactly the sum of its parts.

JOHN MULLEN

LYLE LOVETT

SMILE ★★★

MCA

Ten years of soundtrack contributions from a country eccentric

The way outsider country singer Lyle Lovett finds the precision point between pop insouciance and blues pain hasn't been lost on the folks who compile film soundtracks. Despite his deadpan demeanor, the Texan can swing, playing with syncopation in a patently theatrical style, and *Smile* sweeps together a dozen sterling covers recorded with his Large Band. Lovett plays the dance-party host on

Ray Charles's "What'd I Say," emotes with gospel power on "Pass Me Not" (with fusion keyboardist George Duke) and matches the seductive languor of a brushed snare drum on "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You." The arrangements are dutifully atmospheric, the better to convey emotions with the wide-screen clarity that makes this elegant release unexpectedly moving.

ARION BERGER

JESSE MALIN

THE FINE ART OF SELF DESTRUCTION ★★★

ARTEMIS

Ex-D Generation singer wipes off the lipstick, puts on a cowboy shirt

With D Generation DOA, suffocated in a blaze of hype, singer Jesse Malin atones for his former band's prefab glam-punk sins (teased hair, tight trousers, calculated rebellion) by stripping away the artifice and hitching a ride on the alt-country freight train. Warmly produced by fellow traveler Ryan Adams, Malin convincingly wraps his tortured warble around the dust-caked tunes, finding a bleary comfort zone in tales of loneliness and lost souls, chugging along at the jangly, anthemic speed of early Tom Petty. Malin picks at reality's scabs with plain-spoken clarity — the haunting title track confronts life's dead ends as a spooky riff repeats with a vertigo-inducing swirl. Malin turns the mirror on his own blemished self on "Riding on the Subway," chiding, "If only I had the guts to speak." He's got them now, and he's saying all the right things.

ERIK HIMMELSBACH

JOHNNY MARR AND THE HEALERS

BOOMSLANG ★★★

ARTISTDIRECT

Author of the Smiths' great guitar hooks steps out and sings

When the Smiths imploded grubbly in 1987, optimists hoped for double happiness if Morrissey and his guitar sidekick, Johnny Marr, burst into bloom as solo forces. It wasn't →



DERMARR JOHNSON
ATLANTA HAWKS GUARD

I LOVE THIS CD!

JAY-Z
THE BLUEPRINT 2: THE GIFT AND THE CURSE
ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAM

"Much better than the first *Blueprint*. Jay-Z went away, chilled out a little bit. His lyrical flow has improved."

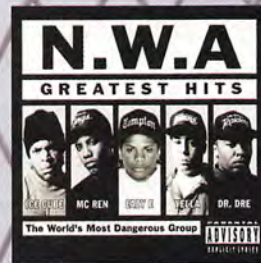
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to be; Marr in particular has been exasperating, with 15 years of dilettantish dabbling with New Order and Talking Heads, among others. There's a considerable irony on *Boomslang*: Marr, a guitarist held talismanic by a generation of Manchester bands including the Stone Roses, Oasis and the Charlatans, borrows heavily from those successors, right down to his engaging but lightweight vocals. These tracks have a louche funk-rock swagger, pushed by Ringo Starr's son, Zak Starkey, on drums. But the only standout is "Down on the Corner," built around the ear-pricking chords and lithe grace that stamp Marr's best work.

STUART MACONIE

EDWIN MCCAIN

THE AUSTIN SESSIONS ★★

ATC

Quiet, word-focused acoustic set from former Hootie cohort

Although his 1998 hit "I'll Be" reflected the South Carolina club roots he shared with Hootie and the Blowfish, Edwin McCain has always been more singer-songwriter than bar-band frontman. So for his fifth album, he dumped most of his band for a stripped-down, acoustic approach. Sounding like a mix of somber *Nebraska*-era Bruce Springsteen and sentimental Texas troubadour Jerry Jeff Walker, McCain's word-focused performances are well-suited to the story-songs "I Want It All" and Dire Straits' "Romeo and Juliet." The whimsical "Little Girls" seems forced, and there are moments when the lazily strummed arrangements make McCain sound as though he's recording in a fern bar, but that can't blunt the sharpness of his songwriting.

J.D. CONSIDINE

MENTHOL

DANGER: ROCK SCIENCE! ★★

HIDDEN AGENDA

"Let's rediscover the '80s!" Illinois trio says. "Again?" the world replies

U.S. DEPT. OF RETRO WARNS: "WE MAY BE RUNNING OUT OF PAST," a headline in the *Onion* once read, and it was right. Today there are enough faux-'80s bands around to soundtrack three *Breakfast Club* sequels. Menthol, from Champaign, Illinois, at least have the right accoutrements: eyeliner, black shirts and a singer-guitarist with the windswept, evocative name Balthazar de Lay. The not remotely dangerous *Danger: Rock Science!* combines the bug-eyed energy of Devo with a little Reagan-era electronica but never makes it memorable or new — which is the only worthwhile purpose of any retro endeavor. Worse, the '80s-lyric references are smug and cutesy rather than effortless. Who needs a line like

"I'll tell you about the state I'm in/And you could be my Cocteau Twin?"

ANDREW HARRISON

MINISTRY

ANIMOSITISOMINA ★★

SANCTUARY

Texas industrial-metal pioneers relocate the plot on their tenth album

With their carpet-bombing riffs, blazing misanthropy and nifty cattle-skull

microphone stands, Ministry's Al Jourgenson and Paul Barker were unofficial godfathers to nü-metal's gothic contingent before a combination of stodgy dirges and heroin addiction derailed their career. At several points on *Animositisomina* (lousy title of the month), the duo belatedly attempts to revive its peak-period formula, but compared to the murderous repetition of Slipknot, it's as old-fashioned as a Lollapalooza 1992 T-shirt. Fortunately,



Zwan's limited-edition trading cards were not a success.

SMASHING!

Ex-Pumpkins leader recasts his music with extra noise

ZWAN

MARY STAR OF THE SEA

★★★★

REPRISE

UNLIKE HIS MEEKER, amped-up contemporaries, Billy Corgan's vision is half art, half extravaganza; in his rock, the Louvre is always dissolving into the Super Bowl, and vice-versa. Now, as the singer for Zwan — a quintet that mixes ex-Smashing Pumpkins drummer Jimmy Chamberlin, A Perfect Circle bassist Paz Lenchantin, Chavez guitarist Matt Sweeney and Papa M guitarist David Pajo — Corgan still insists on big emotions, big sonic effects, big sales. As Zwan create a louder and less obviously pop éclat than the Pumpkins, they also turn more minimal. Their first record has one theme: the electric guitar.

Throughout 14 songs of elegant lurch, Zwan steady a fast-moving, metallic-edged, occasionally thrashy presence bereft of air and space; if five jets in takeoff mode could make a record, they might sound like Zwan. Inside this, "Lyric" is chanty, "Ride a Black Swan" harmonically dark and interesting, "Baby, Let's Rock" sur-

prisingly haunted by the 1950s. "Of a Broken Heart" brilliantly rewrites the Stones' romantic '70s ballad "Angie." Some songs, such as "El Sol" and "Honestly," open with hints of poplogic, then zoom away; "Endless Summer," pure headbanger fabulousness, is the best. The record's penultimate track, "Jesus I/Mary Star of the Sea," is a near-15-minute-long opus that starts off loose and groovy, then explores movement after movement of differently arranged and -voiced guitar sensations; it desperately wants to extend the legacies of Rush and Van Halen into the era of Queens of the Stone Age.

Fifty years ago, Corgan might have left Chicago for New York, bent on writing the Great American Novel. But now he's determined to launch a new band and produce the Great American Guitar Record — the current apex of a tradition he's sure deserves to be respected and extended. JAMES HUNTER

BILLY CORGAN'S CURRENT LISTENING

THE ROLLING STONES FORTY LICKS VIRGIN

PAPA M WHATEVER, MORTAL DRAG CITY

Jourgenson and Barker's new ideas are better. They tweak fuzzy electronics and distorted neopsychedelic guitar like a metal Chemical Brothers on "Impossible" and render Magazine's cold-blooded post-punk classic "The Light Pours Out of Me" a colossal anthem, making *Animositisomina* at least a partial creative rebirth.

DORIAN LYNKEY

MOE.

WORMWOOD ★★

MUSIC/ARTIST/DIRECT

Jam band from upstate New York turn themselves into Hacky Sack stars

A mainstay of the granola circuit since 1991, moe. have evolved live from a mere jam band into a euphoric hurricane. Guitarists Chuck Garvey and Al Schnier shred like Tasmanian devils in heat as two percussionists whip the music into a polyrhythmic froth reminiscent of Frank Zappa jamming with the Grateful Dead. *Wormwood*, the group's fifth studio album, seamlessly integrates both stage and studio tracks, alternating terrific semiautobiographical songs about growing up, such as the nostalgic "Kids" and the life-saving rocker "Okayalright," with increasingly experimental instrumentals. Naming your record after the active ingredient in absinthe is boastful, but *Wormwood* is an intoxicating spin.

RICHARD GEHR

MURS

THE END OF THE BEGINNING

★★★

DEFINITIVE JUX

News flash: indie rapper with a sense of humor!

By independent rap's stern, self-serious standards, Murs is a real weirdo. Though he shares his peers' penchant for wordy, complex flows, the Los Angeles veteran is more concerned with simple pleasures like skateboarding, partying and satiating his Too \$hort-size libido: "Got your ol' ball-and-chain chained to my balls," he brags on "The Scuffle." The slapstick, Digital Underground-assisted "Risky Business" recounts a lurid night in search of lettuce (hint: a head of

DAVE CHAPPELLE
STAR OF CHAPPELLE'S SHOW

I LOVE THIS CD!

THE ROOTS PHRENOLOGY
MCA

"It's a hot one. I have real eclectic tastes, but I'm a big rap fan, and I love the idea of a band with a lyricist."

lettuce), while his passionate salute to sk8er boys, "Transitions of a Rider," is typical of his broke-and-proud wit. "I'm big pimpin' with less money and women," guest Aesop Rock jokes on their ode to medication, "Happy Pills." Call it ballin' on a budget.

HUA HSU

THE MUSIC

THE MUSIC ★★

CAPITOL

Demented debut from hotly hyped young Brits. New band-name suggestions gratefully received

Hurtling down Spinal Tap's thin line between cleverness and stupidity, northern English four-piece the Music have created one of the most hilariously overheated debuts in memory. It sounds as though they were handed the keys to a deluxe recording studio and, in the rush to see what all the buttons do, left the concept of subtlety bloodied and bruised on the floor. Thus "The People" and "Float" resemble the Verve hyper-ventilating over clubfooted dance beats, and every song is crushed beneath an interminable avalanche of effects-heavy riff-ola. Their youthful gusto is admirable. The results, alas, are not.

DORIAN LYNSEY



NADA SURF

LET GO ★★

BARSLUK

New York nerd-rock trio that got popular dissing the cool kids now sings about snowstorms and Bob Dylan

Their jock-mocking anthem "Popular" was snideness incarnate, but even in 1996, the Brooklynites in Nada Surf seemed sweeter than their MTV blockmates, detached Weezer and bitter Local H. Now, humbled by years of label tiffs and the tree-falls-in-a-forest reception to 2000's slick sophomore nonstarter, *The Proximity Effect*, they've let go of the ironic arena dream. Recorded in 2001, this wistful, road-trip nostalgia-pop is the sound of alt-rock after the gold rush. The lead track, "Blizzard of '77," is an ethereal pre-global-warming Northeast reverie;

"Blonde on Blonde" is a rainy-day Dylan homage; and "Inside of Love" steams the glass with jangly longing. Matthew Caws's suffocated vocals add some New York tone to the gauzy melodicism. Though his songs grow similar, *Let Go* is a smart glimpse at life beyond the yearbook caption.

LAURA SINAGRA

WILLIE NELSON

CRAZY: THE DEMO SESSIONS

★★★★

SUGAR HILL

Pothead cowpoke's first recordings, from back when his lungs were clean

Willie Nelson made these 15 recordings in 1961 when he was a struggling songwriter but misplaced them until 1994, perhaps losing them amidst divorce papers, IRS notices and E-Z Wider rolling papers. By the mid-'70s, his

confident fusion of western swing, blues and Tin Pan Alley made him an outlaw-country figurehead, and these demos—including the version of "Crazy" pitched to Patsy Cline, who recorded it and made Nelson immortal—are the blueprint for that style, 15 years in advance. Country's doobie brother would refine some songs ("Three Days," "Local Memory"), but even as a desperate, \$50-a-week tunesmith, his sound was in place: the unmistakably reedy voice, the delicate arrangements and lyrics that spill like blue-eyed tears.

ANDREW DANSEY

DONNY OSMOND

SOMEWHERE IN TIME ★★

DECCA

Twentieth comeback attempt by former Mormon sex symbol culls covers of cool old hits

A former teen idol and current game-show host—now 45, a father of five, still smiling—Donny Osmond returns →

ASTONISHING FACT! >>

ZWAN's Billy Corgan dated Courtney Love before she married Kurt Cobain. The Nirvana frontman dissed Corgan, calling him "the pear-shaped box."

Pure soul.



Pure vision.

All me.

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THE GUIDE NEW RELEASES



Even Supergrass
can't bear to look
at that shirt.

with a surprising oldies collection of eerie arrangement efficiency and vocal know-how. First you notice his noble falsetto turning at the end of Harry Nilsson's '70s ballad "Without You." Then the supernatural flow of Hall & Oates's early-'80s ballad "I Can't Go for That." Then Air Supply's '80s ballad "All Out of Love" — with balls. Then a slaying of Charles & Eddie's pop-funk "Would I Lie to You?" On his recent saloon collection for ancient boomers, Rod Stewart tried to get a similar fugue of sound and memory. The man for the job, however, turns out to be Donny.

JAMES HUNTER

ERLEND OYE

UNREST ★★★★★

SOURCE/ASTRALWERKS

Norwegian folkie gets in touch with his inner club kid

Two years ago, the Norwegian duo Kings of Convenience titled its second album *Quiet Is the New Loud*, which read like a manifesto for the sad-eyed folk movement then in full swing. (Volkswagen's famous Nick Drake-driven Cabrio commercial was the

high point.) After an album of electronic remixes, Erlend Oye of Kings of Convenience has ditched the gently strummed guitars. On his solo debut, the melancholia revival meets the electro revival, as Oye collaborates with 10 different knob twiddlers from Barcelona, Helsinki and New York. That's a lot of variety, but Oye's single-minded thematic focus (each song laments a different girl) and velveteen baritone hold everything together. Electropop artists are the new singer-songwriters!

JEFF SALAMON

RAINER MARIA

LONG KNIVES DRAWN ★★★★★

POLYVINYL

Fourth album from neurotic Wisconsin-bred power-pop trio

Since their 1995 inception, Rainer Maria have released three albums filled with short, sharp guitar pop reminiscent of the Breeders. With nine tracks spanning just 30 minutes, *Long Knives Drawn* speeds through aggressive, seesaw melodies as singer Caitlin De Marrais does her woman-on-the-verge-of-a-nervous-breakdown shtick with terrifying conviction. She doesn't sing, she yells, and the results — especially on "Mystery and Misery," in which she intones, "You took me by surprise by getting all worked up under the table" — are riveting, making this Rainer Maria's strongest offering yet. True, they aim to frazzle the listener's nerves like a thousand Throwing Muses before them, but there's an intensity here that's hard to resist.

NICK DUERDEN

I LOVE THIS CD!



JIMMY KIMMEL
STAR OF JIMMY KIMMEL LIVE AND THE MAN SHOW

EMINEM
THE EMINEM SHOW
AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE

"He goes into great detail about his family. Talk about real — this is as real as it gets."

THE SEA AND CAKE

ONE BEDROOM ★★

THRILL JOCKEY

Post-rock "supergroup" lunges, with glockenspiels and piccolos in hand, into smooth electropop

They're led by Tortoise alpha male John McEntire and Sam Prekop from cerebral pioneers Shrimp Boat, but TSAC sound like the only Chicago post-rockers with ambitions beyond turning into Weather Report. Their sixth album is a fizzling delight, jettisoning previous jazzy inclinations in favor of a gorgeous electronic pitter-patter that sets off Prekop's velvety, mourning vocals. The luxurious "Mr. F" is MOR by any other name, scuffed up deliciously by McEntire's trademark wheezing synths; "Four Corners" sounds like Krautrockers Neu! if they had ever decided to record an album of elevator music. Closing with a sensitive, Philly soul-style cover of David Bowie's "Sound and Vision," *One Bedroom* shows that Chicago avant-gardesters can appeal as much to the heart as the head.

JOHN MULLEN

SOCIALBURN

WHERE YOU ARE ★★

ELEKTRA

Imitating Creed is to 2003 what imitating Nirvana was to 1994

They claim to be influenced by country, grindcore and even Ween, but Socialburn sound more like their inspiration came right from John Kurzweg, who also produces Creed and Puddle of Mudd. Given the disparity between the varied influences and the neogrunge result, it's easy to imagine that Kurzweg, the Lou Pearlman of commercial metal, plucked these four former homecoming kings from bumfuck Blountstown, Florida, and fed them a strict diet of Nickelback, Incubus and Train before herding them into the studio. Socialburn's debut shows some promise: Select verses ache and certain choruses soar, but just when "Down"



Erlend Oye, perhaps unsurprisingly, sings about girl trouble.

and "I'm Happy" threaten to get gritty, the mix is softened with bland, harmless commercial pop hooks. Even sugar-coated angst doesn't usually sound quite this prefabricated.

JON WIEDERHORN

SUPERGRASS

LIFE ON OTHER PLANETS

★★★★

ISLAND

Britpop foursome records love letter to David Bowie, suds

Over the fuzzed-out guitar solos and thousands of hooks on Supergrass's fourth album, singer Gaz Coombes invokes the phrase *rock & roll* as if he thinks it still means something. Maybe it does: Most of these concise, super-catchy tunes are as unself-consciously traditional, and fun, as an undiscovered cache of British Invasion rock. The lush chords, faux-backward guitar riffs and starfucker lyrics of "Prophet" could be either vintage T. Rex or Bowie, but Supergrass are less strange and much, much more soused, making them the giddy cousin to Blur's pompous Britpop. The songs are so head-bobbingly hummable, you hardly notice how pickled the band must have been to record this loopy power-pop bender.

PAT BLASHILL

TOSCA

DELHI 9 ★★

G-STONE/IK7

Cult Austrian DJ-pianist duo gets mellow to the point of catatonia

As half of feted Viennese remix duo Kruder & Dorfmeister, Richard Dorfmeister makes dubby trip-hop so soothing and stylish, it plays the first time you install Macintosh's new OS. His side project, Tosca, a collaboration with classical pianist Rupert Huber, is even more laid-back. You feel you ought to be wearing a black turtleneck and reading Camus while this spacious ambient jazz shimmers past in a cloud of echoes. Although upbeat and enchanting, the first disc of *Delhi 9* is actually a little inferior to Tosca's previous album, *Suzuki*, where they nailed the dreamy-beats thing to perfection. The second CD dismantles and reconstructs Huber's solo piano pieces in a still more Zenlike fashion. Addicts will love it; others will call for strong black coffee.

ANDREW HARRISON

TURIN BRAKES

ETHER SONG ★★

SOURCE/ASTRALWERKS

Acoustic duo discovers amplification but can't decide what to do with it

Confirming the suspicion that inside every mild-mannered troubadour →

Join the British New Wave Re-Invasion

Culture Club, Simple Minds and Spandau Ballet Remastered & Reissued



CULTURE CLUB – First Box Set Ever!
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lurks a rock beast snarling to get out, Turin Brakes have kicked away the stools and cranked up the volume on much of their sophomore set. Unfortunately, the London duo rocks as convincingly as a presidential candidate at a benefit gig. As "Long Distance" explodes into its bombastic power-ballad chorus, Olly Knights's rich croon twists into an overripe yowl, and all charm flies out the window. When they're not straining to be anthemic, Turin Brakes still weave a seductive spell: "Stone Thrown" and "Falling Down" are descended from Mazzy Star's languorous desert songs, shimmering with heat-haze guitar and a wonderful, aching melancholy. Evidently some inner rock beasts should remain on a tight leash.

DORIAN LYNSEY

UNWRITTEN LAW

MUSIC IN HIGH PLACES ★★

LAVA/ATLANTIC

For their fifth full-length album, *Unwritten* go unplugged

What happens when you turn modern-rock chart-toppers Unwritten Law loose in Yellowstone National Park? They get high. On *Music in High Places*, recorded

live for the MTV series of the same name, the So-Cal stoners play acoustic versions of their favorite original tracks (including the radio hit "Seein' Red"). From the raucous punkabilly freak-out "Blame It on Me," energized by crowd whoops, to Scott Russo's gloriously ragged vocals on "Up All Night," it's like a best-of collection done as a campfire sing-along. The stripped-down sound reveals Russo's lyrical weaknesses but also reveals melody beneath the angst-ridden bombast.

JOSH EELLS

Turin Brakes:
"I told you not to
eat that last taco."



JODY WATLEY

MIDNIGHT LOUNGE ★★

SHINBONE ALLEY/SHANACHIE

Seventh album by former Best New Artist puts her in the rarefied company of Milli Vanilli

On *Midnight Lounge*, Jody Watley sings about "happier days for you and I" over jazzy beats, telling us that she's still "thinking about the good times." Revisiting good times may have

helped Watley. From 1977 to 1987, her career blossomed as she made the transition from *Soul Train* dancer to member of manufactured dance-pop sensation Shalamar. Her 1987 solo debut even won a Best New Artist Grammy, setting up the same precipitous decline as endured by fellow winners Culture Club and Milli Vanilli. After two albums that went unreleased in the U.S., Watley, 44, trades in dance-pop for moodier down-tempo

tracks by noted house producers, but except for "Essence," a smart, broken-beat bonus track, trite lyrics and flat vocals cast her as a low-budget Sade.

ALEC HANLEY BEMIS

DAR WILLIAMS

THE BEAUTY OF THE RAIN

★★★

RAZOR & TIE

Unconventional New England folk-popper shifts from humor to sincerity

Nothing endears folk-pop to nonfolkies like a good joke. When Dar Williams's early records mocked hemp huggers and middle age, she got a foot in the door and slipped sincerity between the bars. There's none of that on *Rain*, the thirtysomething songwriter's fifth disc; these are straightforward takes on the scariness of change and the importance of being true to yourself. Williams brings beauty to standard folk themes, as in "The One Who Knows," a parenting ballad destined for a thousand bitter-sweet graduation ceremonies. Her impatience for folk instrumentation and her voice — sweet, but much meatier than the average acoustic songbird's — keep things engaging, except on the Enya-esque "Whispering Pines."



RUSH

The Spirit Of Radio: Greatest Hits (1974-1987)

Available

2.11.2003



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Elsewhere, John Medeski's keyboards and Bela Fleck's banjo make this as lively as contemporary folk gets.

JOHN DEFORE

GARY WILSON

FORGOTTEN LOVERS ★★★

MOTEL

More songs about mirrors and girls by a lonely weirdo from upstate New York

If Gary Wilson's 1977 microcult favorite, *You Think You Really Know Me*, was a rarity when reissued last year, then what is this follow-up? These unreleased and barely released recordings from 1973 to 1979 continue a lo-fi blend of outsider music, new wave, Steely Dan and Philly soul so hip, Beck name-checked Wilson in "Where It's At." Amid jazzy chords and angst-drenched synths, Wilson's unsettling lounge-lizard persona toes a thin, awkward line between teenage horniness and grownup desperation, detailing a creepy side of unrequited love — plus a preoccupation with reflective surfaces. In his resourceful, low-budget recordings and discomfiting candor, Wilson joins Jad Fair and Daniel Johnston in the dubious canon of unhinged basement auteurs.

MICHAEL AZERAD

ZION I

DEEP WATER SLANG V2.0

★★★★

LIVE UP/RAPTIVISM

Oakland hip-hop duo celebrates the joys of getting high-minded

On their second album, Zion I alternate between earnest intellectual uplift and pure, bass-heavy bounce. Both approaches are successful, but ultimately *Deep Water*'s shallowest tracks are its best. The menacing "AEIOU" is twenty-first-century dancehall that sounds something like Madness's "One Step Beyond" taken one more step beyond (and samples a Speak & Spell on its hook, to boot). "Cheeba Cheeba" and "Le Le Le" are club-friendly bangers built on neck-snapping bass lines and sing-along choruses. Meanwhile, the album's more self-consciously conscious songs hint at Zion I's potential power without fully realizing it. On "One More Thing," they flirt with bluesy, electric gospel abandon, then pull back, as if not quite ready to plumb the depths of the mostly uncharted hip-hop waters at which they've arrived. Maybe that's for V3.0.

G. BEATO

Blender Approved

The best new releases of the last three months



2PAC

BETTER DAYZ

AMARU/THA ROW/INTERSCOPE

For a dead guy, 2Pac sure puts out a lot of CDs. Among these unreleased tracks, "Still Ballin'" bounces with new-millennium gloss, and "Thugz Mansion" spookily foreshadows his 1996 death.



ALANIS MORISSETTE

FEAST ON SCRAPS

MAVERICK

The reflective sage of troubled relationships offers nine recent outtakes on this DVD/CD combination, which is full of yoga-room atmospheric, hair-metal riffs and barbed yelps.



KATHLEEN EDWARDS

FAILER

ZOE/ROUNDER

A real find on the alt-country circuit, this 23-year-old singer-songwriter writes detailed narratives about troubled girls struggling to rise up — but sinking deeper, usually into a bourbon bottle.



SHANIA TWAIN

UP!

MERCURY NASHVILLE

Perky as a puppy but way more wealthy, this Canadian singer erases the border between country and pop on her glossy fourth album with effervescent cheer and oaths of self-esteem.



A Must For Rush Fans

This greatest hits collection spans their Mercury recording years from 1974 to 1987

Featuring "Tom Sawyer," "New World Man," "Subdivisions," "The Spirit Of Radio," "2112/The Temples Of Syrinx," "Fly By Night" and "Closer To The Heart"

Features rare photos and track annotations

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THE 40

MOST POPULAR SONGS IN AMERICA

It's the Battle of the Mall Superstars! The main event: the lung power of Christina vs. the skate-tude of Avril. Let's get ready to rummmmmble...

Hey! It's the chart!



1 **AVRIL LAVIGNE** "I'M WITH YOU" LET GO

Now comes phase three in the leftfield success story of the year. This classic power ballad follows the sk8er chick's entry into the big leagues — her debut, *Let Go*, is now certified quadruple-platinum. Grammy watchers speculate that, by the time of her April 11 headlining tour bow at Ontario's Molson Centre, Lavigne will have snagged Best New Artist honors and will be heading toward 5 million in sales.



Nelly: Overjoyed at number 3.

HOW WE DID IT >>>>

The Most Popular Songs chart is based on radio and video airplay, and album sales. Provided by **HITSDailyDouble.com**. "Proof that any idiot in the music business can have a Web site."



POSITION	TITLE	ARTIST	ALBUM/LABEL
1	"I'M WITH YOU"	AVRIL LAVIGNE	LET GO ARISTA
2	"BEAUTIFUL"	CHRISTINA AGUILERA	STRIPPED RCA
3	"AIR FORCE ONES"	NELLY	NELLYVILLE FOREL/UNIVERSAL
4	"LANDSLIDE"	DIXIE CHICKS	HOME OPEN WIRE/PROJUNKT/COLUMBIA
5	"ALL I HAVE"	JENNIFER LOPEZ FEAT. LL COOL J	THIS IS ME... THEN EPIC
6	"CRY ME A RIVER"	JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE	JUSTIFIED JIVE
7	"HONESTLY"	ZWAN	MARY STAR OF THE SEA REPRISE
8	"LOSE YOURSELF"	EMINEM	8 MILE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK SHADY/INTERSCOPE
9	"BUMP, BUMP, BUMP"	B2K AND P. DIDDY	PANDEMONIUM! EPIC
10	"SHE HATES ME"	PUDDLE OF MUDD	COME CLEAN FLAWLESS/EPFEN
11	"LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH AND FAMOUS"	GOOD CHARLOTTE	THE YOUNG AND THE HOPELESS EPIC
12	"CLOCKS"	COLDPLAY	A RUSH OF BLOOD TO THE HEAD CARTEL
13	"THUGZ MANSION"	2PAC	BETTER DAYZ AMARU/THA ROW/INTERSCOPE
14	"YOUR BODY IS A WONDERLAND"	JOHN MAYER	ROOM FOR SQUARES AWARE/COLUMBIA
15	"'03 BONNIE & CLYDE"	JAY-Z FEATURING BEYONCE	THE BLUEPRINT 2: THE GIFT & THE CURSE ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAY
16	"GREY STREET"	DAVE MATTHEWS BAND	BUSTED STUFF RCA
17	"ALL MY LIFE"	FOO FIGHTERS	ONE BY ONE RCA
18	"I'M GONNA GETCHA GOOD!"	SHANIA TWAIN	UP! MERCURY NASHVILLE
19	"FAMILY PORTRAIT"	PINK	MISSINDAZTOOD ARISTA
20	"MISS YOU"	AALIYAH	I CARE 4 U BLACKGROUND/UNIVERSAL
21	"LOVE OF MY LIFE"	ERYKAH BADU FEAT. COMMON	BROWN SUGAR ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK MCA/IMPACT
22	"MADE YOU LOOK"	NAS	GOD'S SON COLUMBIA
23	"DON'T KNOW WHY"	NORAH JONES	COME AWAY WITH ME BLUE NOTE
24	"COCHISE"	AUDIOSLAVE	AUDIOSLAVE EPIC/INTERSCOPE
25	"STOLE"	KELLY ROWLAND	SIMPLY DEEP COLUMBIA
26	"JENNY FROM THE BLOCK"	JENNIFER LOPEZ	THIS IS ME... THEN EPIC
27	"INNERVISION"	SYSTEM OF A DOWN	STEAL THIS ALBUM AMERICAN/COLUMBIA
28	"PICTURE"	KID ROCK FEAT. SHERYL CROW	COCKY LAVA/ATLANTIC
29	"WHEN I GET YOU ALONE"	THICKE	CHERRY BLUE SKIES JIVE/AMERICA/INTERSCOPE
30	"DO THAT"	BABY FEAT. P. DIDDY	BIRDMAN CASH/IMPACT/UNIVERSAL
31	"CRY"	FAITH HILL	CRY WARNER BROS. NASHVILLE
32	"YOU KNOW YOU'RE RIGHT"	NIRVANA	NIRVANA GEFEN
33	"IGNITION"	R. KELLY	CHOCOLATE FACTORY JIVE
34	"THUG LOVIN'"	JA RULE FEATURING BOBBY BROWN	THE LAST TEMPTATION PRUDER INC. DEF JAY
35	"HOW YOU GONNA ACT LIKE THAT"	TYRESE	I WANNA GO THERE J RECORDS
36	"THE GAME OF LOVE"	SANTANA FEAT. MICHELLE BRANCH	SHAMAN ARISTA
37	"DISEASE"	MATCHBOX TWENTY	MORE THAN YOU THINK YOU ARE ATLANTIC
38	"WORK IT"	MISSY ELLIOTT	UNDER CONSTRUCTION GOLD/IMPACT/EXTRA
39	"WEATHERED"	CREED	WEATHERED WIND-UP
40	"THROUGH THE RAIN"	MARIAH CAREY	CHARMBRACELET PIONARC/ISLAND

2 **CHRISTINA AGUILERA** "BEAUTIFUL" STRIPPED

Miss Aguilera's rebirth as "Xtina" has been a bumpy ride — the freaky assless chaps- and-plushies video for "Dirrty" inspired a snarky *SNL* parody, and the tune tanked on



radio. This inspirational torch song, though, written by Pink's change-agent, Linda Perry, has already bested its predecessor and scaled Top 40 and MTV playlists. The stage is set for a headlining tour beginning in March.

7 **ZWAN** "HONESTLY" MARY STAR OF THE SEA

Airt-rock colossus Billy Corgan spent the holiday season playing all-star radio festivals, a time-tested method of securing airplay. Before the January 28 release of



Zwan's debut, modern-rock radio had already pounced on this vintage Pumpkins-era tune.

9 **B2K AND P. DIDDY** "BUMP, BUMP, BUMP" PANDEMONIUM!

Having the urban boy-band market all to themselves sent this Los Angeles quartet's



debut single, "Uh Huh," up the R&B charts, but "Bump, Bump, Bump," with production and a cameo from P. Diddy, has crossed the four-some over to pop.

33 **R. KELLY** "IGNITION" CHOCOLATE FACTORY

Given such lyrics as "Girl, please let me stick my key in your ignition, babe," it



appears R. Kelly is ready to move on from contrition. But radio's cautious reception to the lascivious lead single from his new album bodes poorly for the R&B star's comeback bid.

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Mad Dawg!

On his first solo albums, Ice Cube chronicled, maybe even predicted, the L.A. riots — then he moved to Hollywood

ICE CUBE

AMERIKKKA'S MOST WANTED

★★★★★

DEATH CERTIFICATE

★★★★

THE PREDATOR

★★★

LETHAL INJECTION

★

PRIORITY/CAPITOL



N.W.A SO UTTERLY blew up hip-hop that writers compared them to the Beatles. By giving the world gangsta in the age of M.C. Hammer, they legitimized West Coast rap. And like the Beatles, each N.W.A member had a distinct personality. Ice Cube was the cute one, still carrying baby fat, and he was the first to bolt for a solo career, when he was 21. These reissues of his first four CDs show that he was the Paul McCartney of the group.

Consider: McCartney wrote an oratorio; Cube wrote a hip-hop *War and Peace*. McCartney is a vegetarian; Cube doesn't eat pork. Both are on record as liking weed. And like McCartney's, Cube's solo career was initially dazzling before settling into thoughtless hackwork.

When Cube teamed up with Public Enemy's production team, the Bomb Squad, on 1990's *AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted*, it seemed like a sick joke. Public Enemy were right-on lefties with an uplifting political program. The only time Ice Cube ever clenched a fist, it was to crack some sucker in the head. But the pairing worked brilliantly.

Cube is one of rap's greatest storytellers. On "Once Upon a Time in the Projects," he displayed a knack for riveting narrative twists, then offered a moral to his fractured fairy tale: "Don't fuck with a bitch from the projects." A natural performer, he spoke in a chesty baritone that boomed like he was a trained stage actor.

AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted indelibly established his persona: the word-spitter with a glare you never forgot, the gangsta who wanted to be loathed, not loved.

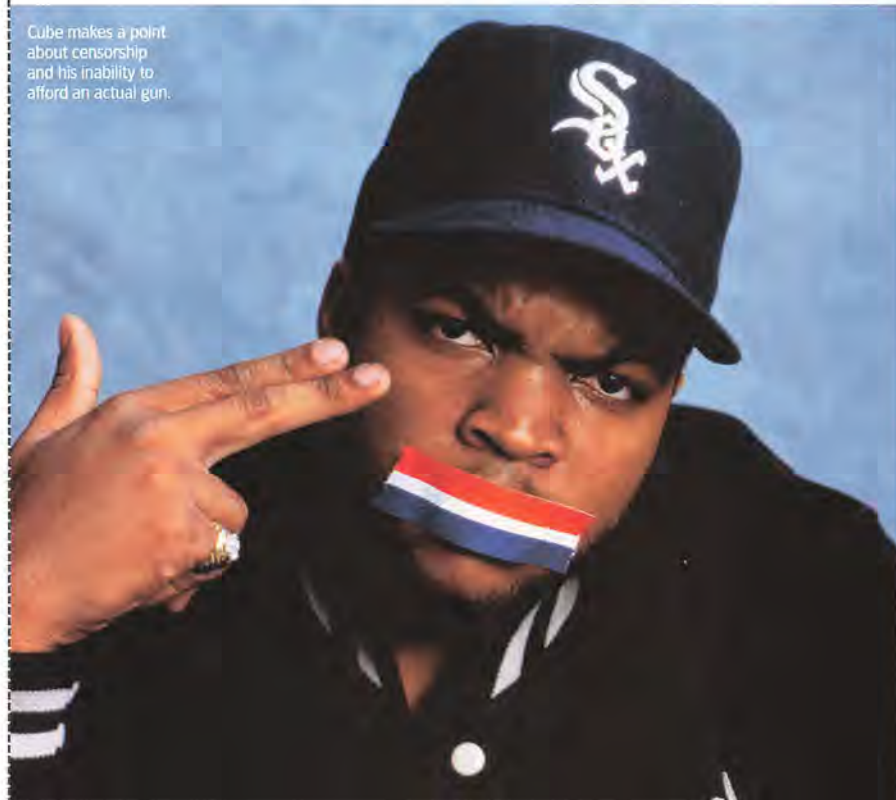
The self-proclaimed "bitch killer" was also confident enough to let female rapper Yo Yo bust his balls on "It's a Man's World." The reissue includes two amazing songs from *Kill at Will*, an EP that followed *AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted*. "The Product" was the first song ever narrated by a sperm. "Dead Homiez" was a lament for a victim of a gang shooting, a song of staggering, open sadness.

Cube dubbed himself "the nigga you love to hate," and on 1991's *Death Certificate* he went all out to prove it. He had recently starred in *Boyz n the Hood*, and purists charged that he'd gone soft. Producing with Sir Jinx, Cube made the sound less busy, as if making room for his encompassing fury. Under the influence of a particularly nasty wing of the Nation of Islam, he turned into a prophet of rage. Cube bashed white people as "devils," didn't like "Japs" or Jews and baited his former pals in N.W.A with anal-sex taunts. These nasty songs summed up the mood of Los Angeles in the year when four white cops were videotaped delivering a vicious beating to black motorist Rodney King.

When King's attackers were acquitted in 1992, rioters turned L.A. into a smoking wreck. The racial violence made Cube look like a seer, and *The Predator* became his best-selling record. The future according to *The Predator* was a brutal, macho place, full of lumpy grooves (except for the DJ Muggs-produced "We Had to Tear This Moth----- Up"). Still, Cube made even a simple, repetitive Isley Brothers groove shimmer on "It Was a Good Day," an it-was-just-a-dream tale of ghetto peace: "Today I didn't even have to use my AK/I got to say it was a good day."

Lethal Injection, from 1993, cemented his transformation to professional Angry Man: The grooves are more Isleys and George Clinton, the politics warmed-over Louis Farrakhan. These days, Cube gets more excited about writing screenplays (the *Friday* series) than rhymes. As an actor, producer and director, he's a Hollywood gangsta, still paid in full — and getting a director's cut, to boot. RJ SMITH

Cube makes a point about censorship and his inability to afford an actual gun.



Cube: "So I like juggling dogs while wearing a top hat. You got a problem with that, motherfucker?"

➤ Ice Cube was the gangsta who wanted to be loathed, not loved.



KING SUNNY ADE

THE BEST OF THE CLASSIC YEARS ★★★★★

SHANACHIE

Royal blasts from Nigerian Afropop's golden past

King Sunny Ade didn't invent juju music, but the guitarist-bandleader made it his own during the '70s with an enthralling, fluid handful of singles and albums. He called his twist on the style "synchro system," which is also the title of a languorous 18-minute track highlighting his style of big band: a battery of percussive, interlocking electric guitars,

melodic talking drums and congas, and sweetly harmonized voices singing proverbs and praises in the Yoruba tongue. Island Records remixed his Afropop hits when they introduced his music to the West in the early '80s, but this magically mellow album proves that the label was just gilding his gold.

RICHARD GEHR

A CERTAIN RATIO

EARLY ★★

SOUL JAZZ

Spastic post-punk Brits adored by New York's artsiest hipsters

They took their name from a Brian Eno lyric, shared a label with Joy Division, decorated their 1979 debut single with four photos of comic Lenny Bruce's corpse and influenced New York's coolest new bands, including the Rapture. A Certain Ratio seem pretty great, until you listen to their music. Playing American funk with dread instead of joy is one thing — adding Latin percussion and jazz horns, then wearing matching khaki shorts onstage, screams *gimmick*. This luscious two-CD package has two good songs: "Shack Up," a flat, hard denunciation of romance, and "Do the Du," which sounds like a post-punk version of the *Knight Rider* theme.

ROB TANNENBAUM

THE SCORE >>

★★★★★

EXCELLENT. A MUST-HAVE

★★★★

GREAT. CHECK IT OUT

★★★

VERY GOOD IN ITS GENRE

★★

JUST OK

★

WEAK



The local kids loved tying string into Boy George's hair while he slept.

THE CLEAN

ANTHOLOGY ★★★★★

MERGE

The mothership of New Zealand punk finally gets its due

The Clean kick-started the illustrious New Zealand label Flying Nun in 1981, providing a key blueprint for indie-rockers from Australia (the Chills) to California (Pavement). Over this two-disc, 46-track set of rarities and essentials, the trio takes the *chugga-chugga* racket of the Velvet Underground and stretches it into an entire garage aesthetic of excited, rudimentary

playing, shaky, Kiwi-accented vocals and endearing melodies. Disc one, as influential for the lo-fi sonics as for the songs, ends with the Clean's 1983 breakup. Disc two spans their 1988 reunion and 1996's *Unknown Country*, mining similar material with even more exciting (and even better-sounding) results. But by then, lots of bands were doing what the mighty Clean had helped pioneer.

MICHAEL AZERRAD

CULTURE CLUB

CULTURE CLUB ★★

VIRGIN

Bloated box set from the king of New Romantic soulsters

Deep underneath the thick makeup, Boy George O'Dowd was a credible soulful crooner who, in his '80s heyday, had a knack for concocting irresistibly frothy pop — before heroin turned him into a ballooned mess. The galloping, Motown-thieving "Church of the Poisoned Mind" and reggae-lite "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me" are two passionate reminders of George's songcrafting skills on this four-disc, 78-track collection that spans his Culture Club and solo years. But unless you grew up with Boy George posters plastered on your bedroom walls, it's about 50 songs of overkill — including a disc

HIPPIE EXCESS

A two-disc look back at the doomed diva of the '60s

JANIS JOPLIN

THE ESSENTIAL JANIS JOPLIN

★★★★★

COLUMBIA/LEGACY

>> EVEN IF YOU knew nothing about Janis Joplin's life, a glance at the titles of some songs she recorded before her drug-overdose death in 1970 at 27 would tell you a lot: "Little Girl Blue," "A Woman Left Lonely," "Women Is Losers," "Misery'n" While most blues singers use music to relieve pain, Joplin used hers mainly to *relive* it. With a shrieking voice that teetered on the edge of melody, she wailed with such intensity, you could sense the hellhounds on her trail whenever she sang.

If you don't believe it, just listen to one of the highlights of this new 30-track collection — Joplin's gut-wrenching version of, of all things, George Gershwin's "Summertime," recorded in 1968 at the height of her powers with her first (and best) band, Big Brother and the Holding Company.

Artistically as well as romantically, this poster girl for '60s earth mamas spent her brief, turbulent existence

looking for love in all the wrong places. A misfit growing up in Port Arthur, Texas, she landed in San Francisco just as the city was blooming hippies, and joined Big Brother, whose freewheeling, acid-dipped blues-rock perfectly matched her raw, ugly/pretty look and style.

Their breakthrough performance at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967 (recalled here with the ever-visceral version of "Ball and Chain"), and '68's radio hit "Piece of My Heart" made Joplin famous, but that led the insecure performer to take the advice of those who thought she needed more "professional" musicians around her.

She got professionalism with her subsequent accompanists (the Kozmic Blues Band and the Full Tilt Boogie Band) but lost the thrillingly unpredictable fury Big Brother generated behind her. Moving toward funk-rimmed rock & soul ("Half Moon," "Move Over"), Joplin was reportedly happier than ever when, with perfect bad timing, she died from an accidental heroin overdose. Like Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison, two other '60s exemplars, she left a frozen-in-time image and a body of work that still sizzles. BILLY ALTMAN



Janis Joplin: Actually, this *is* her "sexy" look.

> While most blues singers use music to relieve pain, Joplin used hers to relive it.

devoted solely to modern remixes of his solo hits. Then again, if you were seeking shrinking violets, you've come to the wrong place.

ERIK HIMMELSBACH

GRAND FUNK RAILROAD

E PLURIBUS FUNK ★★★★★

SURVIVAL ★★★

PHOENIX ★★

WE'RE AN AMERICAN BAND ★★

CAPITOL

Misunderstood giants of '70s rock, adored by Homer Simpson

Loud, crass and overly earnest, Grand Funk Railroad were also, despite their name, totally devoid of funk. Formed in 1968, the critically reviled Flint, Michigan, boogie-metal act — singer-guitarist Mark Farner, drummer-singer Don Brewer and bassist Mel Schacher — peaked in 1971, releasing both the furious, tuneful, almost disco-beated *E Pluribus Funk* and the nimble, Zep-like *Survival*. Recorded without longtime producer Terry Knight's direction, 1972's ponderous *Phoenix*, with new keyboardist Craig Frost, failed to duplicate *Survival*'s supple rhythms. Later that year, after they shortened their name to Grand Funk, *We're an American Band*'s title anthem shot to number 1, thanks to its roaring celebration of booze, gambling and groupies, not to mention a pounding, unforgettable chorus and a hot cowbell — the idealized pinnacle of these purist rock simpletons.

NICK CATUCCI

HUMAN LEAGUE/ THE FUTURE

THE GOLDEN HOUR OF THE FUTURE ★★★

BLACK MELODY

Before "Don't You Want Me," these Brits were murkier and creepier

"We grew up with the sound of machinery," synth player Martyn Ware remembers in the notes to this compilation of songs recorded as early as 1977, when the Human League pompously called themselves the Future. Growing up in Sheffield, England, a depressed steel town, turned them into technology-obsessed synth tweekers, Ware suggests. Scorning rock instruments ("There are no guitars or drums played on this record"), their early material features ramshackle assemblages of bleeps, zaps, television sound bites and dispassionate vocal blurts. On the excellent "Dance Like a Star" and a disturbing instrumental of the Four Tops' "I'll Be There," pulsing disco grids uplift the electronic noodling. "We're the



Grand Funk Railroad, hoping to find a needle, or their dignity, in a haystack

Human League, and we're much cleverer than you," singer Phil Oakey announces. Not so fast, synth boy.

JONAH WEINER

JAWBREAKER

ETC. ★★★

BLACKBALL

Nineties punks opened for Nirvana, now stand as first-wave emo saints

Before emo became the domain of tame ballads and stiff shout-alongs that wouldn't be out of place in a Leni Riefenstahl film, it was the most passionate and proudly progressive arm of punk. On this 20-track compilation of B-sides and outtakes, Jawbreaker, Blake Schwarzenbach's predecessors to his current group, Jets to Brazil, exemplify the genre's descent from ragged, expressive glory to the underground version of soft rock. Scrappy and amateurish at first, the Bay Area trio matures into a fierce, astonishingly intense unit; the dull power-pop they



Elvis Presley, before he came to resemble Ned Beatty

made during a brief major-label sojourn circa 1995 is an unfortunate epilogue to their strong body of work. Highlights here include "With or Without U2," a brilliantly goofy medley of U2, the Misfits and the Vapors, offering something else you never hear in emo anymore: a sense of humor.

BEN SISARIO

MEN AT WORK

BUSINESS AS USUAL ★★

CARGO ★★

COLUMBIA/LEGACY

First two discs from the Aussie equivalent of Huey Lewis and the News

Twenty years ago, this Aussie combo caught lightning in a bottle for two reasons: They were mildly quirky — Aussies seemed exotic, if you can believe it — and they sounded like the Police, who had dumped pop-reggae to write songs about Carl Jung. Men at Work's gentle tunes ("Who Can It Be Now," "Down Under"), coupled with Colin Hay's self-effacing no-worries-mate persona, got their unremarkable mugs on MTV and made *Business as Usual* one of the most successful debuts ever. Released a year later, *Cargo* was more sunny, easily palatable pop, containing thoughtfully melodic hits: "Overkill," which was softly neurotic, and "It's a Mistake," which was softly antiwar and anti-Reagan. After one more dud album, they broke up; war, being more sturdy, has outlived them.

ERIK HIMMELSBACH

MICKEY AND THE SOUL GENERATION

IRON LEG ★★

CALI-TEX/QUANTUM PROJECTS

Nasty late-'60s funk from a Texas bar-circuit crew forgotten by time

The fattest drums and bass drive a Hammond organ so licentious it

shouldn't be allowed out after dark, while acid-tinged guitar underpins two saxophones in a six-piece setup. This southern funk is an evolutionary link between '60s James Brown and '70s street funk, with Tex-Mex musical accents. And somehow, the Soul Generation had been forgotten, even by funk collectors, until DJ Shadow's label assembled this set. The exuberance is so sustained that the woozily melodic "Joint Session" — a pun? — and "Mystery Girl" come as welcome relief. Only the less finely focused "bonus" live disc is excessive.

LLOYD BRADLEY

ELVIS PRESLEY

ELVIS 56 ★★★★★

HEART & SOUL ★★

GREAT COUNTRY SONGS ★★

ELVIS THE HOLLYWOOD HITS ★★

RCA/BMG HERITAGE

Four more repackages from the King (of postmortem releases) in all his career guises

Judging by last year's chart-topping 30 #1 Hits, the world can't get enough dead Presley, so these four new collections are targeted at different congregations within the Church of Elvis. The orthodox should flock to *Elvis 56*, which documents everything thin young Presley recorded in the year of his ascendance to the rock & roll throne, including "Heartbreak Hotel," "Hound Dog" and "Blue Suede Shoes." (This exact package was released in 1996, but we won't tell if you won't.) For devotees of the heavily costumed Continental Elvis, there's *Hollywood Hits*, which ranges from the sublime ("Jailhouse Rock") to the ridiculous ("Wooden Heart" — the King in German!), while *Heart & Soul* spotlights Romantic Elvis ("Love Me Tender," "It's Now or Never"). As for *Great Country Songs*, well, as any Cracker Elvis congregant knows, the sentimental "Old Shep" was one of mama Gladys Presley's favorite tunes.

BILLY ALTMAN →

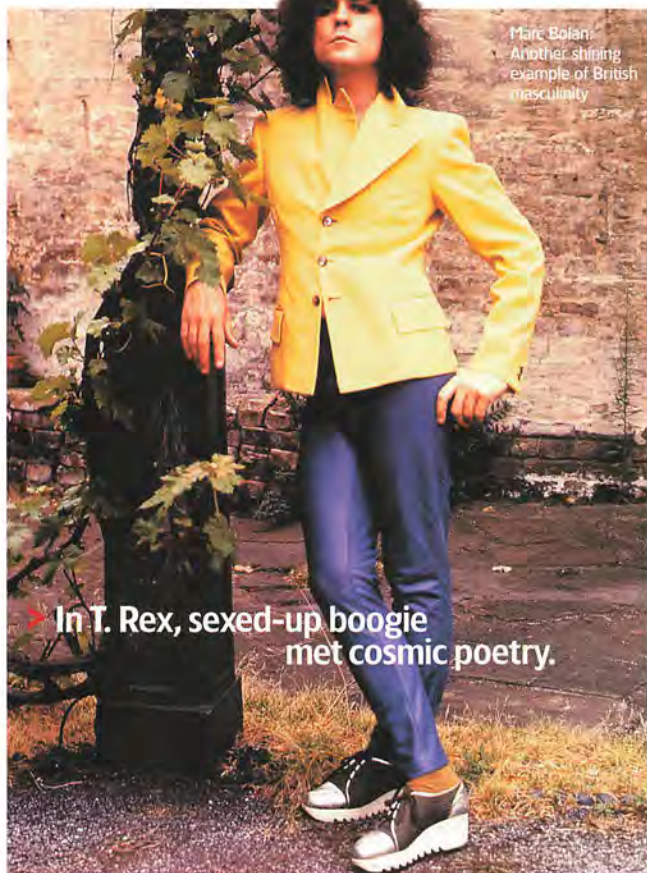
I LOVE THIS CD!



BROCK LESNAR
THE WWE'S NEXT BIG THING

AC/DC
BACK IN BLACK
ATLANTIC

"I'm a big country-music fan, but I also listen to rock bands: Creed and AC/DC. Lately, I've been listening to a lot of *Back in Black* — it really gets you ready for a match."



Marc Bolan: Another shining example of British masculinity

In T. Rex, sexed-up boogie met cosmic poetry.

FINE AND DANDY

Chugging, sexed-up boogie meets wide-eyed cosmic poetry

T. REX

ELECTRIC WARRIOR: EXPANDED AND REMASTERED ★★★★★

REPRISE/RHINO

➤ MARC BOLAN WAS a little guy with large dreams. He named his band Tyrannosaurus Rex, after the biggest and baddest of beasts — yet the “band” was two hippies with a pair of bongos. In 1968, as they played the humble clubs of flower-power London, the lispng singer was scheming to become the next decade’s most outrageous star. *Electric Warrior* is a glorious reminder of just how close to that he came.

Though he had cultivated a fey, otherworldly manner, Bolan was a tough-minded careerist who seized his moment. The pop stars of the ’60s had grown bearded and serious, and he sensed a niche for flash and glamour. He truncated the group’s name to T. Rex and expanded the lineup to an electric four-piece. Bolan’s simple semifolk tunes were beefed up into crunching glam-rock anthems (he practically invented the

genre); the lyrics became a fantastical blend of *The Lord of the Rings* and Chuck Berry. By 1971, he whipped up British fan hysteria so extreme it was called “T. Rextasy.”

The wonderfully confident *Electric Warrior* catches Bolan in the first flush of stardom. With Tony Visconti, the producer he shared with friend and archrival David Bowie, Bolan switched between two basic modes: cross-legged pixie minstrel (“Cosmic Dancer,” “Life’s a Gas”) and supercharged rock god (“Jeepster,” “Mambo Sun”). This reissue fleshes out the story — chugging, sexed-up boogie meets wide-eyed cosmic poetry — with a radio interview and extra tracks from the height of T. Rextasy, including Bolan’s first British chart-topper, “Hot Love.”

Serious rock fans scorned his pop ambitions, and T. Rex are recalled mainly for their biggest and earthiest hit, the sexy and vampiric “Bang a Gong (Get It On).” Bolan remained a cult hero for the remaining six years of his life, as teenyboppers were soon seduced away by less complicated pretty boys in more normal clothes. PAUL DU NOYER

REDD KROSS

NEUROTICA ★★☆☆

FIVE FOOT TWO/OGILIO

The great (OK, very good) “lost album” from L.A. cult punk-pop pranksters

Though they were forged out of the ’80s California punk crucible that spawned Black Flag and Circle Jerks, Redd Kross broke the mold with an ironic, pop-cultured melodicism, tweaking styles from bubblegum to metal. *Neurotica*, their third (and best) album, disappeared quickly after its 1987 release when its label went kaput, but the reissue — fully remastered, with two bonus tracks — proves a punk-prescient masterwork. A cover of Sonny and Cher’s “It’s the Little Things” is typical silliness, but the garage nugget “Peach Kelli Pop” suggests that if they had only waited 15 years and adopted funny Nordic accents, Redd Kross could have given garage arrivistes like the Hives a run for their MTV moolah.

MATT DIEHL

SMOKEY ROBINSON & THE MIRACLES

OOO BABY BABY: THE ANTHOLOGY ★★★★★

MOTOWN

The smoothest talent on America’s smoothest record label

At first, singer-songwriter William “Smokey” Robinson — light-skinned, middle-class, girlishly voiced, hopelessly square — may seem like another immaculately polished widget off the Motown assembly line. Compared to the other great babymakers of ’60s and ’70s soul, he’s not as godly as Al Green, as deep as Marvin Gaye, as dirty as Barry White. But as this 52-song, two-CD set casually proves, Smokey and his Miracles stealthily infiltrated the back seats and bedrooms of white America with near-ecstatic make-out songs about the cruelties of teenage romance. In the ’60s, Bob Dylan called Robinson the “greatest living poet,” and to imagine Dylan putting the moves on a hot folkie babe with “Tracks of My Tears” cooing from the record player is to picture the American dream come gloriously true.

CRAIG MARKS

RUSH

THE SPIRIT OF RADIO: GREATEST HITS (1974–1987) ★★★★★

MERCURY

If you buy this collection, your girlfriend will break up with you

From 1974 to 1979, Rush were indefensible. Prog haters snickered at singer-bassist Geddy Lee’s dog-whistle whine, Rush’s disturbing fondness for kimonos

and dull 20-minute multipart suites, and their nonrocking Canadian ancestry. Above all, drummer Neil Peart penned lyrics so goofy, even Yes would snicker — see, for example, 1978’s “The Trees,” excerpted here: “So the maples formed a union/And demanded equal rights/The oaks are just too greedy/We will make them give us light.” But this efficient collection of classic-rock-radio staples devotes 11 of its 16 tracks to the 1980s, when Rush discovered concise songwriting, reggae beats and synthesizers — in other words, when they discovered the Police. On the sleek singles “Tom Sawyer” and “Time Stand Still” (with guest singer Aimee Mann), they added power and elegance to prog-rock’s Dungeons & Dragons vision.

ROB KEMP

SIMPLE MINDS

LIFE IN A DAY ★★☆☆

REEL TO REAL CACOPHONY ★★☆☆

EMPIRES AND DANCE ★★★★★

SONS AND FASCINATION/SISTER FEELINGS CALL ★★☆☆

NEW GOLD DREAM (81-82-83-84) ★★☆☆

SPARKLE IN THE RAIN ★★☆☆

VIRGIN

The entire back catalog of Scotland’s U2 reissued: first, the good half

Simple Minds began as insurrectionary new-wavers — confrontational, Bowie-fixated, immaculately European — and finished the mid-’80s as a grandiose megarock cipher. Their debut, *Life in a Day* (1979), is headbanging post-punk pop, flaunting their love of Roxy Music with lots of saxophones. By *Reel to Real Cacophony* seven months later, they’d gone frosty and robotic, sounding like a Caledonian Kraftwerk. *Empires and Dance* (1980) was their Eastern Bloc funk album, featuring the tremendous “I Travel,” their pinnacle as an avant-garde disco project. The lumpier *Sons and Fascination* (1981) turned rockward and came with a superior experimental album, *Sister Feelings Call*, which featured the wonderful, hallucinatory instrumental “Theme From Great Cities.” Nobody had a clue what the title of 1982’s *New Gold Dream* (81-82-83-

I LOVE THIS CD!



HEIDI KLUM
SUPERMODEL



MAGNOLIA ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK
WARNER BROS.

“I know it came out a long time ago, but I really like it. It’s mellow and beautiful, you know?”



The Stranglers: punks, yak impersonators

84) meant, but the songs — "Glittering Prize," "Promised You a Miracle" — were declamatory, guitar-laden and increasingly conventional. By *Sparkle in the Rain* in 1984, they were knocking out "Waterfront" and other guileless, Zippos-in-the-air anthems. Their lone pop hit, "(Don't You) Forget About Me," and a long, slow artistic decline were just around the corner.

ANDREW HARRISON

THE STRANGLERS

PEACHES — THE VERY BEST OF THE STRANGLERS ★★

CAPITOL

Malicious, black-clad British "punks" serenade revolution and junkies

Criticized by their British punk peers for being old, sexist and overly adept at playing their instruments, the Stranglers made some enduring singles, nearly all of which are rounded up on this collection. And while it doesn't quite explain how a band that featured Doors-y keyboard embellishments was considered punk, Hugh Cornwell's growl sounds no less sinister today, especially when he's giving a history lesson on the fantastic "No More Heroes" ("Whatever happened to Leon Trotsky?/He got an ice pick/That made his ears burn").

True, over time, they developed a penchant for redundant covers ("All Day and All of the Night," "96 Tears"), but all is forgiven when listening to "Golden Brown," second only to Lou Reed's "Perfect Day" in the sounds-like-a-love-song-but-it's-really-about-shooting-up category.

CLARK COLLIS

MATTHEW SWEET

TO UNDERSTAND: THE EARLY RECORDINGS OF MATTHEW SWEET ★★

HIP-O/ABM

Power-pop master rolls out his new-wave baby pictures, knows Michael Stipe's home number

Cherry-picking the music Matthew Sweet made prior to 1991's *Girlfriend*, one of power pop's classic albums, makes sense, and this fine 22-track compilation also tells a story: that of a talented singer and guitarist searching for his style. Five winsome tracks from his early-'80s Athens, Georgia, duo Buzz of Delight earnestly aped R.E.M. He abruptly went solo for 1986's major-label debut, *Inside* — its 10 different (over)producers included the Pet Shop Boys' Stephen Hague and R.E.M.'s Scott Litt. The overlooked *Earth* (1989) was effervescent, unabashedly synthetic pop — MTV hits that never were. Finally, Sweet found Neil Young: in five 1990 demos, he dropped the processed approach, leading him to an artistic breakthrough.

MICHAEL AZERRAD

THEORETICAL GIRLS

1978–1981 ★★

ACUTE

The most definitive compilation yet from NYC Sonic Youth precursors

In New York, 1977, the guitar was a fetish object: Talking Heads made it sound nervous and aware, Television made it sound poetic and elastic, the Ramones made it sound like the →

BURIED TREASURE

UNEARTHING LOST CLASSICS

BIG AUDIO DYNAMITE

THIS IS BIG AUDIO DYNAMITE

★★★★

COLUMBIA, 1985



B.A.D.: Actually, quite good

With, frankly, a not-very-good singer (ex-Clash guitarist Mick Jones), a keyboard player who couldn't play the keyboards at all (moonlighting filmmaker Don Letts) and a fusion of rock and hip-hop five years ahead of its time, Big Audio Dynamite were doomed on several counts. They never made the big time, but B.A.D.'s debut stands as one of the great musical cross-fertilizations, with rap, dance, punk and rock influences edited sharply into Jones's baroque, movie-obsessed lyrics.

STANDOUT TRACKS: "Medicine Show," "E=MC²," "Bad" CLARK COLLIS

SHARE YOUR PASSION!



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2 CD's — 22 GREATEST HITS
New versions of "Green River," "Suzie Q," "Born On The Bayou," "Travelin' Band," "Lodi," "Fortunate Son," "Grapevine" & "Bad Moon Rising"



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subway. Theoretical Girls, an experimental quartet, made guitars sound like vandalism: fun, explosive, nonsensical. Tearing up the rock template, these Lower East Side artsos whipped punk into a mix of droning chords, organ accents and endlessly building backbeats, releasing only one single in their career. Featuring Glenn Branca, who went on to write electric guitar symphonies, and future Sonic Youth producer Wharton Tiers, they were more interested in frayed textures and minimalist repetition than melody, and shouted nonsensical staccato lyrics ("Levi's and T-shirts and pants and sneakers!") over the squealing strings and atonal riffs of "Computer Dating" and "Chicita Bonita."

JONAH WEINER

UNCLE TUPELO

ANODYNE ★★☆☆

REPRISE

Feuding alt-country band from Illinois nailed its last album, then folded

In Jay Farrar and Jeff Tweedy, the pioneering No Depression band Uncle Tupelo had enough songwriting talent for two great bands — and shortly after releasing *Anodyne*, they splintered into Wilco and Son Volt. On Uncle Tupelo's 1993 major-label debut, Farrar's sentimental "Slate" and "High Water" limn a country-derived heartache, while Tweedy's clever songs, including "Acutt-Rose," nod more to pop. But even as it became obvious the band wasn't big enough for both men, the soaring guitars and yearning vocals on "Give Back the Key to My Heart" seem to offer a reassurance that this moment could last forever.

ROBERT LEVINE

VARIOUS ARTISTS

FUNKY KINGSTON — REGGAE DANCEFLOOR GROOVES 1968–74 ★★☆☆

TROJAN

The cream of the funk songbook performed by some of the greatest reggae artists who ever lived. All right!

Anchored as they are by the rock-steadiest of rhythms, reggae artists have always felt confident absorbing influences from other cultures, whether it's the Upsetters aping spaghetti westerns or the Dub Syndicate gleefully bludgeoning the theme from *Dr. Who*. Seventies funk was almost influential in Jamaica, and the fusion is nicely documented on this 20-song collection. Although it features originals by Toots & the Maytals ("Funky Kingston," "Funky Funky") and Bob Marley ("Soul Almighty"), the real surprise comes in joyfully skank-tastic renditions of "Na Na, Hey Hey" (the Pioneers), "War"



Whitesnake: Hey, girls, have you seen the band?

(Tomorrow's Children) and, best of all, a retooling of "Shaft" by John Charmers, which hints that a certain private dick is as keen on smoking weed as being a sex machine to all the chicks.

CLARK COLLIS

VARIOUS ARTISTS

LONDON IS THE PLACE FOR ME ★★☆☆

HONEST JON'S/ASTRALWERKS

Trinidad's finest calypsoans, recording in London in the 1950s, make an enticing cultural mélange

In the 1950s, immigrant musicians from Trinidad immersed themselves in the London jazz scene and, as shown by most of these 20 tracks, it seriously influenced their native calypso style. Lord Kitchener's title track and "Bebop Calypso" are big-band swing of real style, as is the Mighty Terror's smooooth "No Carnival in Britain." Lord Beginner's "Fed-a-Ray" has a woozy Duke Ellington-in-Marrakesh feel melded to steel drums, and clarinets give his "Jamaica Hurricane" and "Mix Up Matrimony" a real ragtime feel. The lyrics also provide an eyewitness account of immigrant life in London 50 years ago — the subject matter includes Queen Elizabeth's coronation, mixed-race marriages, unreasonable landlords, public transportation, racial hostility and cricket. All history lessons should be like this.

LOYD BRADLEY

VARIOUS ARTISTS

TROJAN X-RATED BOX SET ★★☆☆

TROJAN

Rude boys and lewd girls make snatch-and-spliff reggae

This three-disc celebration of sex from the venerable Jamaican label escapes novelty status on the strength of the performances, mostly satisfying '60s

and '70s rock-steady grooves. Laid over the backing tracks are a succession of dirty jokes, explicit come-ons, orgasmic moans and genuinely weird imagery ("He got barbwire in his underpants"). Also, there's the Soul Sisters' nasty version of "Little Drummer Boy" ("Wreck a Buddy"), which makes more sense when you realize that *pum pum* is island slang for a woman's most personal possession. "Play With Your Pussy," "Pussy Catch a Fire," "Push It In"

and other songs with *pussy* in the title summarize reggae's long-held fascination with sex.

JOHN RATLIFF

WHITESNAKE

HERE I GO AGAIN: THE WHITESNAKE COLLECTION ★

GEFFEN

Remember when "The 'Snake" were huge? Yes, we blocked it out, too . . .

Once a refuge for talented but less-than-photogenic British blues-rockers, the garishly named Whitesnake — formed by singer David Coverdale after the 1976 breakdown of Deep Purple — had by the mid-'80s mutated into a bunch of poodle-permed, beer belly-free metal muthas. It's this latter-day incarnation on which *The Whitesnake Collection* concentrates, featuring every track from 1984's *Slide It In*, 1987's *Whitesnake* and 1989's *Slip of the Tongue*. Sadly, while "Is This Love" and "Here I Go Again" were massive hits in their day, they now merely remind you how hair metal got a bad name. And if you think any song that slavishly rips off Led Zep's "Kashmir" can't be all bad, you must not have heard the utterly diabolical "Judgment Day."

CLARK COLLIS

Blender Approved

The best reissues of the last three months



BOARDS OF CANADA

TWOISM

WARP

On the Scottish duo's nine-track 1995 mini-album, the atmospheric electronica is spooky, chilly, and stark — imagine background music for an MRI.



PAUL SIMON

THE PAUL SIMON COLLECTION

WARNER BROS.

Laying reggae, salsa, gospel and even Afropop into crafty pop, Simon was the most restless '70s songwriter, singing softly about heartache and aging.



NEW ORDER

RETRO

WARNER BROS.

A comprehensive four-CD box showing how these remote British titans reinvented rock via dance electronics and disco euphoria.



VARIOUS ARTISTS

CASH MONEY RECORDS: PLATINUM HITS VOLUME 1

CASH MONEY

This hits collection from the Dirty South's dominant label is the gauche essence of bling-bling.

REISSUES IN BRIEF >>>>>> BY ROB KEMP

RICHARD BUCKNER

RICHARD BUCKNER ★★

OVERCOAT

In 1996, sensitive San Francisco balladeer Buckner recorded this demo in a local studio — it was him, his husky voice, a guitar and 11 stolid songs. Most were rerecorded on his 1997 major-label debut, *Devotion & Doubt*, but the solo versions suit his desperate themes.

PEGGY LEE

THE SINGLES COLLECTION

★★★★★

EMI

With her relaxed, ethereal phrasing, Lee — who died of a heart attack in January 2002 — was the white Ella Fitzgerald, if not the female Frank Sinatra. Spanning the postwar pop era, this superb collection of 105 singles includes her 1958 slow-burn classic "Fever" (covered by Madonna) and her jaunty take on Leiber & Stoller's nihilistic "Is That All There Is?" (covered by PJ Harvey).

LOVE AND ROCKETS

LOVE AND ROCKETS ★★

BEGGARS BANQUET

Named for Jamie and Gilbert Hernandez's classic '80s comic book, pasty-faced English trio Love and Rockets was essentially Bauhaus without morbid singer Peter Murphy. Their fourth, best-selling album is goth-rock at its bubblegum-iest, adding trashy glam rockabilly and psychedelia. Inexplicably, the only dreadful cut is the album's hit, the dated "So Alive."

BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS

RASTAMAN VIBRATION ★★★★★

TUFF GONG/ISLAND

Although Marley and the Wailers' fourth album is light on standards on the level of "No Woman, No Cry," it does contain two songs that resonated decades after its 1976 release. Lennox Lewis used "Crazy Baldhead" as his entrance music in matches against Mike Tyson, while "War" was memorably and controversially recited by another crazy baldhead, Sinéad O'Connor, on *Saturday Night Live* in 1992.



Peggy Lee: The original Pink



Bob Marley: "Grass, grass or grass: No one rides for free."

MOUNTAIN

CLIMBING! ★★

COLUMBIA/LEGACY

Long Island-born guitarist-singer Leslie West was known in the early 1970s for his girth (his first solo album was titled *The Great Fatsby*) as well as his guitar prowess. While the first and best album from his power trio, Mountain, owes an obvious debt to Cream, West increased the raunch factor with the cowbell-driven "Mississippi Queen" and the badass-riffing "Never in My Life."

GARY NUMAN

I, ASSASSIN ★★

BEGGARS BANQUET

Shortly after crashing the Cessna plane he piloted (and two years after his lone U.S. hit, "Cars"), synth-pop oddball Gary Numan made this noir-influenced album, a U.K. Top 10 in 1982. Next to his fetish for Berlin-era Bowie, such chilly soundscapes as "Music for Chameleons" and the title song also echo early-'80s Prince.

LOUIS PRIMA & WINGY MALONE

THE COMPLETE BRUNSWICK & VOCALION RECORDINGS (1924-1937) ★★★★★

MOSEBY

Six discs cover the early career of Prima, the New Orleans trumpeter-vocalist beloved by David Lee Roth (who culled his 1985 medley "Just a Gigolo/I Ain't Got Nobody" from him). Heavy on Dixieland jazz, this box is notable for the co-billing of Malone, an amputee who lost his right arm in a streetcar accident, then learned lefty trumpet fingering.

ROXETTE

THE BALLAD HITS ★★

VIRGIN

Ignoring the recent success of the Hives, Sweden's musical calling card is the faultless, shiny popcraft practiced by ABBA and their late-'80s disciples Roxette. The slow-dance confection "Listen to Your Heart" and the melodramatic "It Must Have Been Love" are still lovely, although none is as eccentric as Roxette's up-tempo tunes.

THE ART OF LOSING BY AMERICAN HI-FI

WRITTEN BY STACY JONES

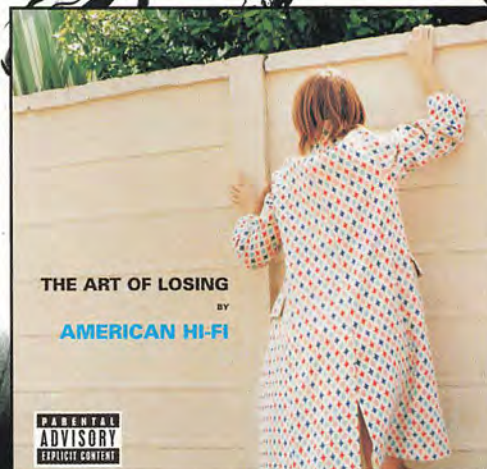
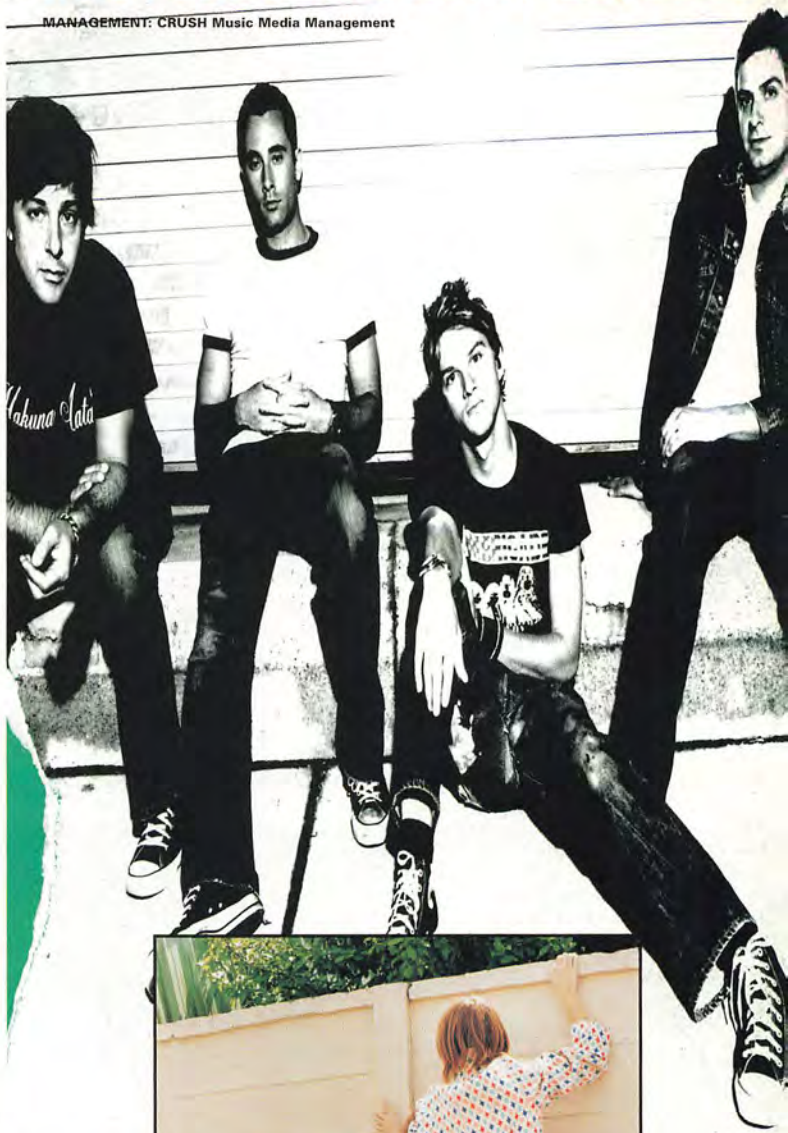
PRODUCED, RECORDED & MIXED BY NICK LAUNAY

FROM THE NEW ALBUM

THE ART OF LOSING

IN STORES FEBRUARY 25, 2003

MANAGEMENT: CRUSH Music Media Management



STING & THE POLICE

➤➤ They were mismatched from the start. In 1977, two Englishmen and an American got together in London: bassist Sting, 25, a milkman's son from industrial Newcastle; guitarist Andy Summers, already 34, from seaside Bournemouth; and prog-rock drummer Stewart Copeland, 24, son of a cofounder of the CIA and brought up in Beirut, Lebanon. Since it was the era of the Sex Pistols, the Police pretended to be punks, then dyed their hair blond, invented white reggae, toured their butts off and became the biggest band in the world. After playing to 70,000 fans at Shea Stadium in 1983, they were blown apart by feuding egos. One of them remains a star.

By Phil Sutcliffe

THE BEST

GHOST IN THE MACHINE A&M, 1981

★★★★★



THEIR BEST ALBUM!

After three increasingly successful albums, the Police shed the punk shoestring mentality and recorded in Montserrat. Augmenting their sinewy arrangements with keyboard ambiances and Sting's sax tooting, they rolled out a grooveful, filler-free set. The stop-start "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic" is the star turn, but global political "insights," New Age fantasizing and French lyrics also decorate the glossiest new-wave textures money could buy. The title refers to philosopher-novelist Arthur Koestler's notions of how creativity can be expressed through technology.

Standout tracks: "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic," "Spirits in the Material World"

SYNCHRONICITY A&M, 1983

★★★★★



Number 1 for 17 weeks in the pop-landmark year of Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, largely due to the self-pitying "King of Pain" and "Every Breath You Take," Sting's deceptively luscious portrayal of love warped into "surveillance, ownership and jealousy," as he put it. At once exuberant and bleak, simple and pretentious, (with an appearance by the Loch Ness monster), it's pinned to Carl Jung's theory of the interconnectedness ("synchronicity") of unrelated events. The music is elaborate, spare and cold, driven by low cunning: They "got rid of all the reggae stuff that Middle America couldn't handle," Copeland sniffed, and as a result outflanked imitators Men at Work and Wang Chung.

Standout tracks: "Every Breath You Take," "King of Pain," "Wrapped Around Your Finger"

EVERY BREATH YOU TAKE: THE CLASSICS A&M, 1995

★★★★★



Ignore the two remixes appended at the end, and what's left are 12 tracks of burning, disciplined writing and playing that stand the Police alongside any band, including the Beatles. That's for quality, not quantity, because Sting was never prolific. Behind

his songs, voice, pushy subtlety on bass and godlike gorgeousness, you'll also notice Summers's gold mine of guitar sounds and Copeland's kinetic connection to every nuance. The three of them fought like dogs — and, for a while, they were a perfect match.

Standout tracks: All of them, naturally

STING TEN SUMMONER'S TALES A&M, 1993

★★★★★

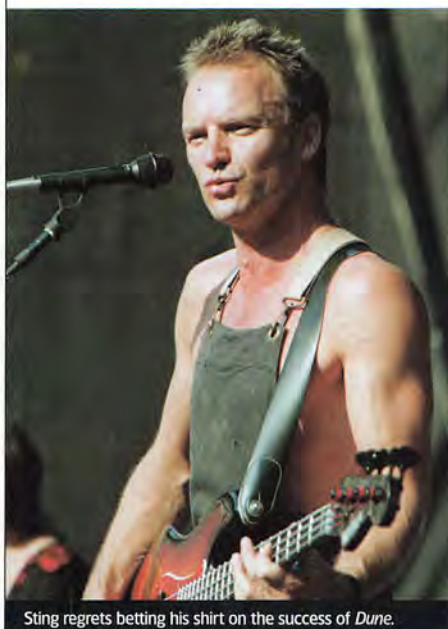


Going solo had been lucrative but musically laborious for Sting until this record. Suddenly, his writing freed up, with folk and jazz inflections infusing his irresistible way with a tune and bolstering his big ideas. Guitarist Dominic Miller and drummer Vinnie Colaiuta

proved to be the twin pillars he needed without Summers and Copeland. Charge him with a list of rock & roll crimes as long as his arm: album recorded at his ancient country mansion, a song with the word *munificent* in the title, the intellectual conceit of connecting his real last name, Sumner, with one of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. But Sting, as a solo artist, was having fun at last.

Standout tracks: "If I Ever Lose My Faith in You," "Seven Days," "Shape of My Heart"

The Police, from left: Andy Summers, Stewart Copeland and Sting. They loved peroxide and dressing like Jennifer Beals.



Sting regrets betting his shirt on the success of *Dune*.

DENVER HOUSTON INDIANAPOLIS LAS VEGAS LONG ISLAND LOUISVILLE

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BE CAREFUL

FIELDS OF GOLD: THE BEST OF STING
1984-1994 A&M, 1994
★★★



Outdated. Still, it's quite impressive that after *Ten Summoner's Tales*, Sting already had enough strong

material to field 17 tracks with only one of his more clunky efforts, "Russians." The extra track "This Cowboy Song" is no reason for must-buy agitation.

Standout tracks: "Fragile," "We'll Be Together"

STEWART COPELAND KLARK KENT: COLLECTED WORKS

CAPITOL, 1995
★★★★



Klark Kent actually had a hit — "Don't Care" creased the middle of the British charts in August 1978 —

before the Police did. This pleased the ever-competitive Copeland because, in truth, he was the masked Klark Kent, the alleged high priest of the Kinetic Ritual cult. Disguised, the Police and their manager, Miles Copeland, a.k.a. Melvyn Milquetoast, backed "Kent" on British TV's *Top of the Pops*. Amid the punky sneers of this entertaining period piece, the collection crucially clarifies the life principles Copeland brought to the Police: "I wanna be rich; I don't wanna work in a ditch" and "If you don't like my hair, you can suck my socks!" Currently out of print. **Standout tracks:** "Don't Care," "My Old School"



Sting tries to teach yoga to his indifferent bandmates.

STING THE DREAM OF THE BLUE TURTLES A&M, 1985
★★



STING GOES SOLO!

Sting's "Pre-tentious? Moi?" years begin. The cliché is that to distance himself from the Police, he ditched his pop

touch and reverted to his jazz roots. In fact, the best tracks on his solo debut brandish a Miles Davis bassist and a Weather Report drummer. The problem was his detour into self-conscious pomp and circumstance. Lovely tunes and civilized ideas were deadened by leaden arrangements and the former teacher's wagging finger. "Deadly for 12,000 years is carbon 14!" "We share the same biology/Regardless of ideology!" Catch yourself rhyming "-ologies," and you know you're in deep de doo doo doo.

Standout tracks: "If You Love Somebody Set Them Free," "Consider Me Gone," "Moon Over Bourbon Street"

BRING ON THE NIGHT
A&M, 1986
★★



Live album follows solo debut: a strange move, hinting at Sting's understandable confusion over

his band-to-solo transition. With bassist Darryl Jones and drummer Omar Hakim joined by the late piano dean Kenny Kirkland, the band naturally excels on jazzy workouts. However, they sound as glum as Sting himself on the more ponderous cuts from *The Dream of the Blue Turtles*. The enjoyable curios are upmarket versions of Police B-sides "Low Life" and "I Burn for You" (a steamy love song dating back to Sting's pre-Police pub band, Last Exit). **Standout tracks:** "The Dream of the Blue Turtles," "One World (Not Three)"

FOR FANS ONLY

STRONTIUM 90 POLICE ACADEMY
ARK 21/PANGAEA, 1997
★★



The first time Sting, Copeland and Summers played together, in May 1977, they were Strontium

90, a quartet with bassist Mike Howlett, formerly of the dire prog-rock group Gong. *Police Academy* combines their only studio session with tracks from their only gig. The two basses sounded meaty, but otherwise there's not much here. **Standout track:** "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic" (Sting demo)

STEWART COPELAND RUMBLE FISH A&M, 1983
★★



One of the best of Copeland's 30-plus movie scores (not made to stand alone as an album, of course). He

played guitar, banjo, keyboards and bass as well as drums. Post-Police, he has also written an opera, a symphony and a *King Lear* ballet score. His percussion-fest *The Rhythmist* is recommended, but it's hard to find.

Standout track: "Don't Box Me In"

ANDY SUMMERS ANDY SUMMERS/JOHN ETHERIDGE: INVISIBLE THREADS
FAVORED NATIONS ACOUSTIC, 2002
★★



Sixty years young this past December 31, ladies and gentlemen! Since the mid-'80s, Summers has released

more than a dozen mainly instrumental solos and collaborations. This latest is a collection of dazzling acoustic duets with Etheridge, a fellow alumnus of British avant-gardists Soft Machine. **Standout track:** "The Big Gliss"

FURTHER LISTENING

STING & GIL EVANS LAST SESSION
JAZZ DOOR, 1987
★★★★

Sting with Evans's big band at the Perugia Jazz Festival in July 1987, months before the pianist and Miles Davis orchestrator died. A mix of Sting, Hendrix and jazz features an intense "Strange Fruit" Respect from a jazz dean had Sting on "cloud nine." **Standout track:** "Strange Fruit"

FURTHER VIEWING

THE POLICE: OUTLANDOS TO SYNCHRONICITIES
POLYDOR HOME VIDEO, 1995
★★★★

The great Police souvenir. All their best songs, live and vibrant, plus bristlingly intelligent interview footage. Surprising star: the fantastical agitation of Copeland's drumming.

FURTHER READING

STING: DEMOLITION MAN
BY CHRISTOPHER SANDFORD
CARROLL & GRAF, 1998
★★★★

Thorough research: tales of a jailed accountant who robbed Sting of \$9 million and of the woman who cleaned his scruffy apartment in 1974. Hugely informative, but astringent to the point of viciousness.

GREAT

OUTLANDOS D'AMOUR

A&M, 1978

★★★★



"Raaaaxanne!" was their white-reggae "eureka!" moment. Recorded in a tiny studio with borrowed

money, their debut lunges between Anglo-punk hurtle and a rhythm that's full of amphetamine-driven high anxiety. Sting writes great tunes, then screams them in what Elvis Costello called a "ridiculous Jamaican accent." The stodgy "Born in the 50's" is the only drag. **Standout tracks:** "Roxanne," "Can't Stand Losing You," "So Lonely"

REGATTA DE BLANC

A&M, 1979

★★★★



Grab that first "Hard Day's Night" guitar chime of "Message in a Bottle," and you'll float in reggae-pop

heaven. *Regatta de Blanc* was recorded in a bug-eyed hurry between tours, and it's likely desperation that resulted in the inclusion of three Copeland songs. But in retrospect, his cynicism nicely challenges Sting's romanticism — and boy, did rivalry feed them.

Standout tracks: "Message in a Bottle," "Walking on the Moon"

MESSAGE IN A BOX: THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS

A&M, 1993

★★★★



Almost the whole story, the gold and the dross, on four CDs. The Police began as pretend punks on "Fall

Out," their first single (with Henry Padovani, a Corsican, on guitar pre-Summers), and ended as pop pashas who couldn't stand to be in the same room when remixing "Don't Stand So Close to Me '86."

Standout tracks: "Roxanne," "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic," "Every Breath You Take"

STING MERCURY FALLING

A&M, 1996

★★★★



Sting's lifestyle had gone rock-aristocrat, but his songs stayed in touch with the every-day. Strictly no

dumbing down, though: He did what he wanted, had faith in listeners' intelligence and drew them in. *Mercury Falling*'s diversity — country, folk, soul — might otherwise have been upsetting, but Sting's increasingly conversational singing and improved, pithy storytelling make the music accessible.

Standout tracks: "All Four Seasons," "I'm So Happy, I Can't Stop Crying"

BRAND NEW DAY

A&M, 1999

★★★★



Sting's late prime continues. Proving his versatility and challenging himself, he assumes some unusual per-

spectives: Here's Sting as a dog in the comedy "Perfect Love . . . Gone Wrong," and Sting as a prostitute — female? — in "Tomorrow We'll See." Bold and sometimes funny, he's as confident mixing with an Algerian *rai* singer ululating in Arabic ("Desert Rose") as singing a glorious chorus with Stevie Wonder on life-force harmonica (the title track).

Standout tracks: "Desert Rose," "Brand New Day"

STING & THE POLICE THE VERY BEST OF STING & THE POLICE

UTV/A&M, 2002

★★★★



This flips the compilation-overkill warning lights. But it's longer and better than the '97 edition: Puff Daddy's

rotten "Roxanne" remix departs, *Brand New Day* is represented and "So Lonely" squeals in from 1978. Definitely no duds.

Standout tracks: All of them, again

CHECK IT OUT

ZENYATTA MONDATTA

A&M, 1980

★★★



Nonstop touring gnawed at them: Manager Miles Copeland's world vision took them to previously

rock-free India, Hong Kong and Egypt. Sting and

Summers's marriages were ending. Apart from two standout love songs, including the Nabokov name-dropping "Don't Stand So Close to Me," Sting starts to get political with the liberal-guilty "Driven to Tears" and the apocalyptic "When the World Is Running Down," which counterpoint Copeland's wry "Bombs Away" (replete with son-of-the-CIA insights). But the creative gauge hovers near the red, and there's way too much padding. "Behind My Camel," anyone?

Standout tracks: "Don't Stand So Close to Me," "De Do Do Do, De Da Da Da"

STING THE SOUL CAGES

A&M, 1991

★★★



Somber again: This time, Sting's father had recently died. He mourned their difficult relationship

through a sequence of seafaring ballads — ships suited his journey-of-life metaphor better than the cart Sting rode in as a kid while his father delivered milk. There are Northumbrian pipes for back-home atmosphere, and some lovely acoustic guitar by Dominic Miller, but the songcraft seems overdeliberate, the music often awkward and strained. This is the bridge between Sting's jazz-hankering days and his emerging mainstream mastery. **Standout tracks:** "Mad About You," "Jeremiah Blues, Part 2"

Nonstop touring gnawed at the Police, and marriages were falling apart.

NOTHING LIKE THE SUN

A&M, 1987

★★★



His third solo album carries his late mother's memory with quiet grace. It's less striving in tone than its

predecessors, despite the elaborate liner notes, which laboriously explain the origins of each song. Significantly, an enduring aspect of Sting emerges: the often mocked but constant soul of civilized decency who tenderly sings the subsequent Amnesty International anthem "Fragile" and the lament for the Chilean *desaparecidos*, "They Dance Alone." The Brazilian rain forest beckons.

Standout tracks: "Fragile," "They Dance Alone"

LIVE! A&M, 1995

★★★



Two CDs, two shows separated by a world of wear and tear. Boston in '79 sees the Police

short on great songs but so primal and burning they could make the dead pogo — and Summers closes the show with "Be My Girl — Sally," his monologue about dirty deeds and a blow-up doll ("A breath of air was all she needed to make her lose that frown"). Atlanta '83 is competent, as ever, but jaded. **Standout tracks:** "Next to You," "Hole in My Life"

STING ... ALL THIS TIME

A&M, 2001

★★★



By malign coincidence, this was recorded live at Sting's home in Italy on September 11, 2001. A

friend of his was reported missing (and later confirmed dead), but the band decided to play on. Knowing this adds a dark weight to the blue, muted performance.

Standout tracks: "Fragile," "When We Dance"



“It’s a Good Excuse for Some Debauchery!”

Spinning discs puts *That '70s Show's* **Danny Masterson** in the partying mood, whether he's clubbing or home entertaining. “How can you not shag to Mick Jagger?” he shouts. “That guy’s the ultimate pimp!” Of course. . . .

BY PAUL SEMEL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSTIN STEPHENS

» "YOU HAVE TO watch out, being an actor who wants to DJ," says Danny Masterson, the woolly headed, conspiracy theory-minded Steven Hyde from *That '70s Show*, as he lounges in the courtyard of his funky Hollywood home. This afternoon, he's not thinking like his character but like his music-obsessed nocturnal alter ego, DJ Donkey Punch.

"I'm not trying to be something I'm not," Masterson insists. "I just love music. And people have so much fun when I DJ, because I play stuff I want to hear."

Masterson is turning 27 in March, which marks his twelfth year in town — he's so L.A., he's even a Scientologist! — and his twenty-second in showbiz, since his first early-'80s Twinkies commercial at age 5. "I did a lot of commercials when I was a kid," Masterson says. Since then, he has

suffered numerous onscreen indignities, such as when John Travolta kicked the crap out of him in *Face/Off*. But with *That '70s Show* finishing up its fifth hit season on Fox (and returning in syndication), he's become a nighttime fixture in L.A. clubs: notorious to both the bouncers guarding the velvet ropes and to the girls inside.

So who's this Donkey Punch dude? Masterson, annoyed by hearing dull discs at party after party, took matters into his own hands four years ago (though he was wise enough to take lessons first from a pro). "It's a good excuse for some debauchery," Masterson says with a laugh. Which explains the two turntables (but no microphone) displayed prominently in his living room, as well as the eclectic mix of his favorite albums — very few of which, strangely, come from the decade that pays his bills. . . .



N.W.A

STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON

RUTHLESS/PRIORITY, 1988

"For me and my friends, living in New York and hearing this West Coast gangsta rap made us all wish we weren't just stupid suburban white kids. It was obviously a very different life than ours; we were just a bunch of nerdy white kids who would recite every single lyric."



CYPRESS HILL

CYPRESS HILL

RUFFHOUSE/COLUMBIA, 1991

"When I was 15, my parents left town for a month. They hid the keys to the car, but I found them. That month, I drove my stepdad's Thunderbird Super Coupe into Manhattan every day, and I would crank Cypress Hill as I flew around the city, racing the taxis."



JANE'S ADDICTION

RITUAL DE LO HABITUAL

WARNER BROS., 1990

"Also when I was 15, I lived with Giovanni Ribisi and his twin sister, Marissa. They'd just turned 16 and gotten this old Chevy Malibu, and they would drive me to all my auditions. This was the only thing playing in their car, so they knew every lyric."



PEARL JAM

NO CODE

EPIC, 1996

"I'm obsessed with Pearl Jam. I bought every one of those live albums, and I'd already spent thousands of dollars on bootleg CDs over the years. You guys at *Blender* just reviewed the whole Pearl Jam catalog, and you gave *No Code* the worst rating! I think whoever wrote that was drunk."



THE ROLLING STONES

BEGGARS BANQUET

ABCO, 1968

"If I'm reading scripts, I'll listen to an old Rolling Stones album. I'm such a fanatic. I've definitely fucked a lot to *Beggars Banquet*, many times over. How can you not shag to Mick Jagger? That guy's the ultimate pimp. You just throw this on and get your swerve on."



THE BLACK CROWES

AMERICA

AMERICAN, 1994

"When I was 18, I did this one-hour drama for ABC called *Extreme* in Park City, Utah. I had a big Bronco with flames painted up the front of it, and the only thing I listened to was *Amorica*, 24/7. I had to go find the European version, with the bush popping out."



RADIOHEAD

KID A

CAPITOL, 2000

"I got to hear a bunch of songs from *Kid A* before it came out. I definitely like *Kid A* better than *Amnesiac*, but I also got to hear four songs that aren't on either album, and they're just as great as the ones that are. Though if I ever meet those guys, I don't plan on telling them that."



NAS

STILLMATIC

COLUMBIA, 2001

"Nas's song 'Ether' just kills me — it's the most disturbing, hysterical, shit-on-Jay-Z song of all time. Wilmer [Valderrama, *That '70s Show*'s Fez] and I love all the same hip-hop, so some nights before the show, he and I will listen to it full blast in our dressing rooms and do every lyric."



KID LOCO

A GRAND LOVE STORY

YELLOW/EAST WEST — FRANCE, 1997

"I got [the French import] from Aron's Records, which is this great record store in Hollywood. Jason Lee introduced me to the song 'Love Me Sweet' off this, and it instantly became one of my favorite singles. I don't know anything about Kid Loco, just that his albums are insane."



THE WHITE STRIPES

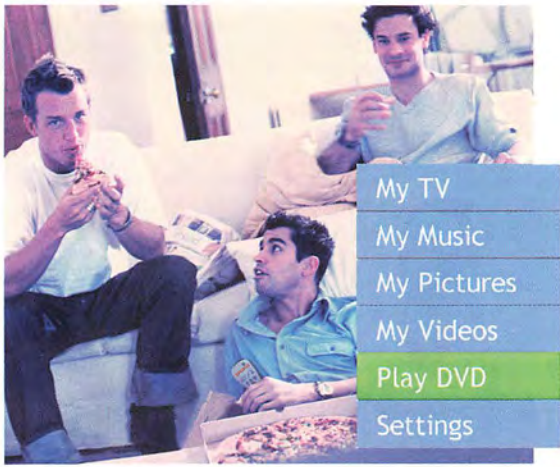
DE STIJL

SYMPATHY FOR THE RECORD INDUSTRY, 2000

"My friend Ben Foster, who's the best young actor in Hollywood — he and I were sitting in his apartment drinking beers, and he was like, 'You've gotta listen to this new record I got.' And it killed me. It's one of those albums: You can listen to every song. It's so simple."

AND THE REST ...

2 LIVE CREW AS NASTY AS THEY WANNA BE A TRIBE CALLED QUEST THE LOW END THEORY AIR PREMERS SYMPATHY ALICE IN CHAINS DIRTY ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT 3 YEARS, 5 MONTHS AND 2 DAYS IN THE LIFE OF BEASTIE BOYS CHECK YOUR HEAD BEASTIE BOYS THE SOUND FROM WAY OUT! BECK MELLOW GOLD BECK MIDNITE VULTURES BECK MUTATIONS BILL WITH- ERS JUST AS I AM BIZ MARKIE THE BIZ NEVER SLEEPS BLORK POST THE BLACK CROWES SHAKE YOUR MONEY MAKER THE BLACK CROWES THREE SNAKES AND ONE CHARM BLACK SABBATH WE SOLD OUR SOUL FOR ROCK 'N' ROLL THE CLASH COMBAT ROCK COMMON LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE SAM COOKE THE BEST OF SAM COOKE CRE- DENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL COSMO'S FACTORY DAS EFX DEAD SERIOUS DEAD PRES- IDENTS ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK DIGITAL UNDERGROUND SEX PACKETS DJ SHADOW ENDTRUDUCING DJ Z-TRIP AND DJ P UNEASY LISTENING, VOL. 1 THE DOORS WEIRD SCENES INSIDE THE GOLDMINE DR. DRE THE CHRONIC BOB DYLAN THE FREEWHEELIN' BOB DYLAN ERIC B & RAKIM PAID IN FULL THE FAMILY VIBES COVERED TO SOUL FU- SCHNICKENS FU DON'T TAKE IT PERSONAL FUGAZI 13 SONGS THE FUGEES THE SCORE GHOSTFACE KILLAH SUPREME CLIENTELE GODSPEED YOU BLACK EMPEROR! SLOW RIDE FOR NEW ZERO KANADA GUNS N' ROSES APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION GUNS N' ROSES CARLIES HANDSOME BOY MODELING SCHOOL SO HOW'S YOUR GIRL? HOUSE OF PAIN HOUSE OF PAIN ICE CUBE AFTERKKA'S MOST WANTED JACKSON 5 ABC JAY-Z THE DYNASTY WYCLEF JEAN THE CARNIVAL LEADERS OF THE NEW SCHOOL FUTURE WITH- OUT A PAST LED ZEPPELIN PRESENCE LEN CAVE STEP OF THE BUM RUSH LL COOL J MAMA SAID KNOCK YOU OUT LORDS OF THE UNDER- GROUND CHIEF ROCKA LUDACRIS WORLD OF MUJIP BOB MARLEY LEGEND MOBB DEEP MURDA MUZIK VAN MORRISON MOONDANCE MORRISSEY BONA DRAG MORRISSEY KILL LUNACY MORRISSEY VS. MOS DEF BLACK ON BOTH SIDES MOTLEY CRUE GIRLS, GIRLS NAUGHTY BY NATURE NAUGHTY BY NATURE NIRVANA NEVERMIND NOTORIOUS B.I.G. READY TO DIE OASIS (WHAT'S THE STORY) MORNING GLORY? OZ DIRTY BASTARD RETURN TO THE 36 CHAMBERS OUTKAST AQUEMINI OUTKAST STANKO- NIA PEARL JAM TEN PEARL JAM VS. PEARL JAM VITAGORY PEARL JAM YIELD PEARL JAM BINALURAL PEARL JAM RIOT ACT PIXIES DOOLITTLE PIXIES SURFER ROSA POISON LOOK WHAT THE CAT DRAGGED IN PORNO FOR PYROS GOOD GOD'S URGE PORTISHEAD DUMPTY PRODIGY THE FAT OF THE LAND PUBLIC ENEMY FEAR OF A BLACK PLANET RADIO- HEAD AMNESIAC RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE EVIL EMPIRE THE RAMONES THE RAMONES RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS BLOODSUGARSEX- MAGIK RESERVOIR DOGS ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK SKID ROW YOUTH GONE WILD SNOOP DOGGY DOGG DOGGYSTYLE SOUNDGARDEN DOWN ON THE UPSIDE THE STROKES IS IT THE TEMPLE OF THE DUMB TEELE OF THE DOG TRIP BASS THE CACTUS ALBUM TWISTED SISTER STAY HUNGRY U2 ACHTUNG BABY U2 THE JOZUA TREE U2 THE PSYCNCE FICTION MIKE WAIT BALL-HOG OR TUGBOAT? WHITESNAKE WHITESNAKE THE WHO WHO'S NEXT? STEVIE WONDER SONGS BY THE KEY OF LIFE WU-TANG CLAN ENTER THE WU-TANG (36 CHAMBERS)

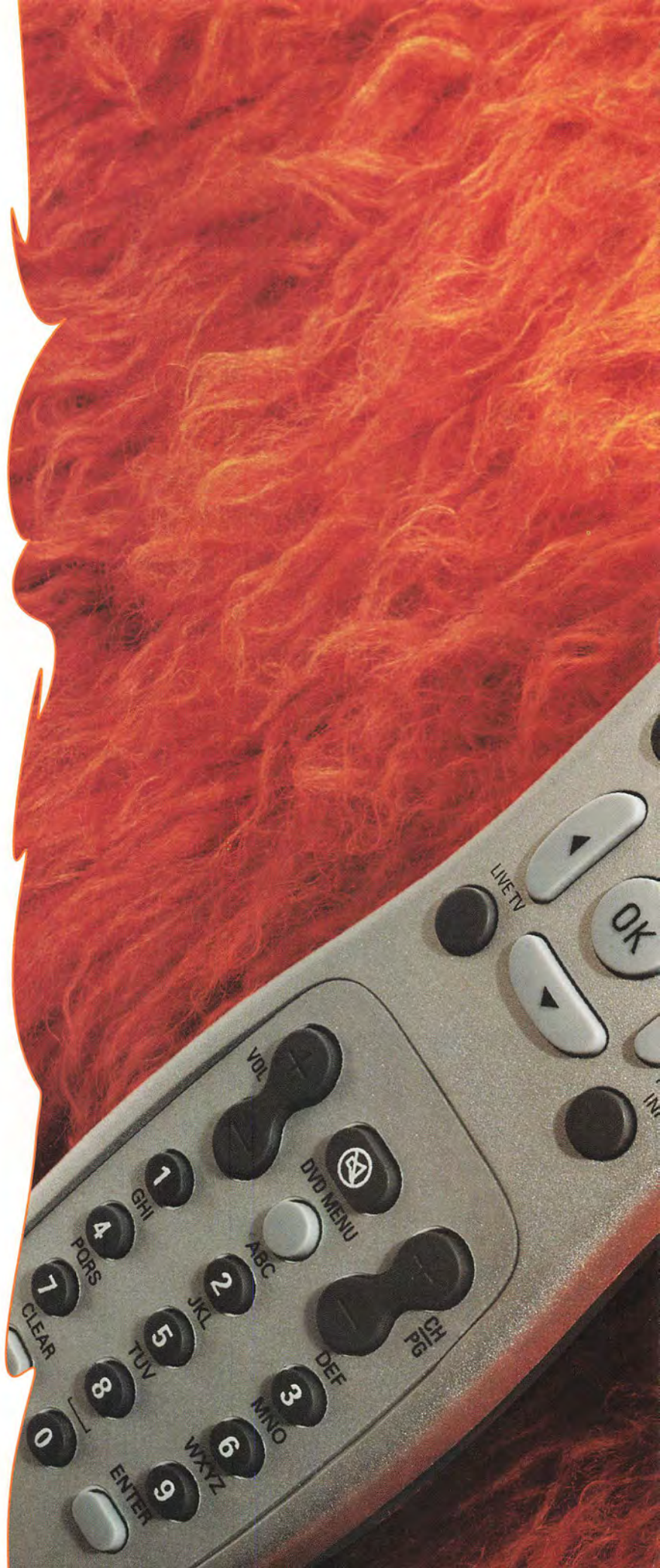


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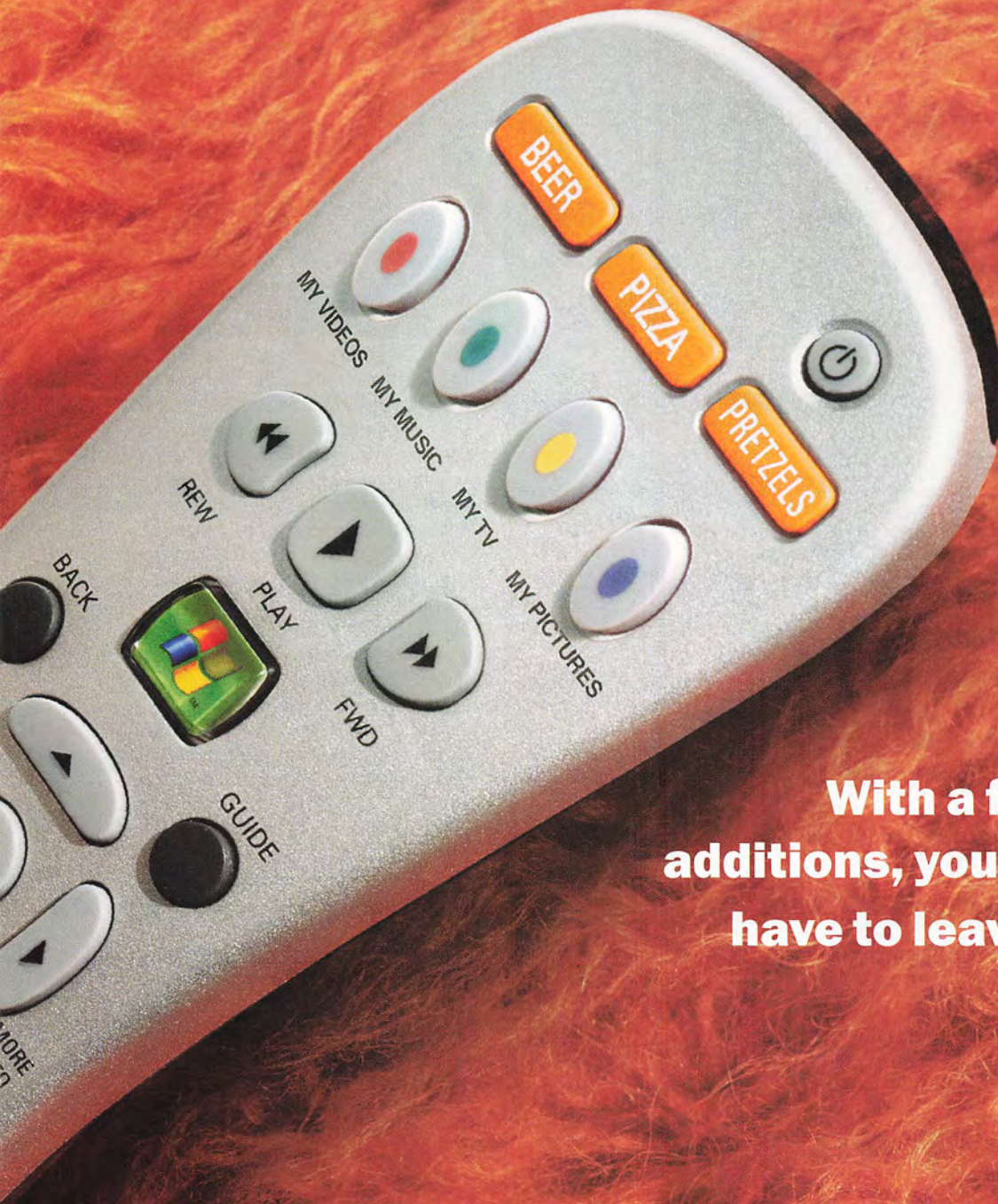
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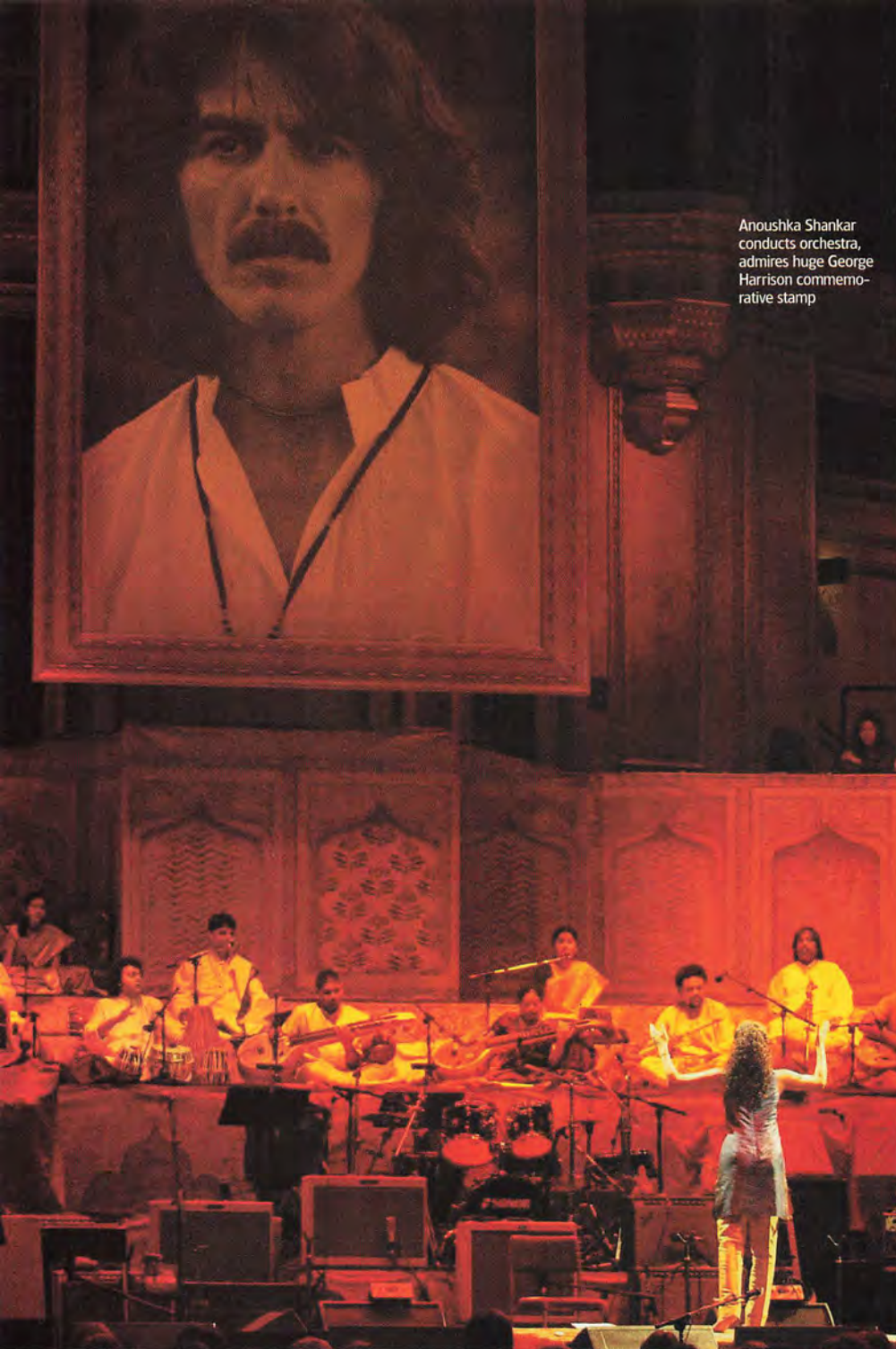
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Anoushka Shankar conducts orchestra, admires huge George Harrison commemorative stamp



Paul spots George's passing aura.

widow, Olivia, "to allow people to explore other philosophies and cultures." In keeping with that ethos, which Harrison personified throughout his career, the show begins with a prolonged set of Indian music performed by a 40-piece orchestra, which is introduced by Harrison's old friend and teacher, sitar maestro Ravi Shankar, and conducted by his daughter Anoushka.

While Harrison distrusted celebrity more than any other Beatle, he was a venturesome collaborator, and nearly every living musician he played with has turned up tonight. Eric Clapton, an old friend and romantic adversary, directs the show, while Harrison's latter-day producer, Jeff Lynne, leads the Indian players through a version of the Beatles' "Lady Madonna" B-side, "The Inner Light." Clapton, sitting near the wing, announces that no one really knows what to say. As if to underline his awkwardness, he muffs the family introductions, calling Harrison's son, Dhani, "George's wife."

Although Harrison could be notoriously solemn, he also had a quiet sense of absurd humor, and the Indian sequence is swiftly followed by members of Monty Python. They run through a couple of vintage sketches, including "The Lumberjack Song," and one routine involving a barbershop quartet who provoke a collective gasp by baring their asses.

From then, mourning turns resolutely to celebration. Wave upon wave of venerable rock & rollers take the stage, with Lynne and Clapton at the core of what can only be called the Billion Dollar Tribute Band. The concert has already highlighted Harrison's importance in bringing Eastern influences to rock, and all that remains is to remind us how many killer tunes he wrote. The musicians enthusiastically attack "I Want to Tell You," "If I Needed Someone" and "Old Brown Shoe," from the Beatles' jangly middle period. At center stage, Dhani plays acoustic guitar, albeit inaudibly.

An old hero of Harrison's, the early British rocker Joe Brown, leads "Here Comes the Sun." But it's the entry of Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers that lifts the event to a new level as they storm through "Taxman" and "I Need You."

Gentle Spirit

George Harrison's famous friends celebrate his life with sitars, ukuleles, two Beatles and a few laughs

CONCERT FOR GEORGE

ROYAL ALBERT HALL, LONDON

NOVEMBER 29, 2002 ★★★★★

» OUTSIDE ON A cold November night, the disciples of Krishna chant and prance in peach-colored robes, competing with the shouts of less spiritual characters — the ticket scalpers — who offer to arrange admission for upward of \$1,000. Inside the Royal

Albert Hall, clouds of incense drift along the curving corridors. And up above the grand, circular auditorium hangs an enormous portrait of George Harrison, staring quizzically down upon the 5,000 gathered to celebrate his life.

On the first anniversary of Harrison's death from cancer, his family and friends have convened an all-star gala to benefit the Material World Charitable Foundation — a fund he established, according to a statement by his



Ringo Starr points toward Harrison's current location.



Joe Brown: In Britain, this man is famous.



Eric Clapton: Look carefully, and you may see his guitar gently weeping.

It's only natural that the Beatles' songs would get a warm reception, but the biggest response so far emerges for a Petty/Lynne reunion on the Traveling Wilburys' "Handle With Care," a folk-rock stomper from these superstars' 1988 side project. The surge of excitement is likely the result of a rumor — unfounded, unfortunately — that the other surviving Wilbury, Bob Dylan, will be a surprise guest.

The arrival on keyboards of Beatles accomplice Billy Preston anticipates the most famous guests. Ringo Starr takes the mic for "Photograph," his 1973 solo hit that he cowrote with Harrison. "What a night," he says. "I loved George and he loved me." The aging band, now about 15 strong, seems to chomp even harder on a vintage bone, the rockabilly favorite "Honey Don't." The Carl Perkins song connects with these codgers' teenage memories and briefly lifts the burden of their being substitute Beatles. Before retreating to his drum stool, Starr brings on "another friend of George's": Sir Paul McCartney.

There is rock aristocracy and there is rock royalty; ex-Beatles belong to the latter. McCartney takes command with Sinatra-like self-confidence. Joking about Clapton's mangled introduction of Dhani Harrison, he simultaneously eases the tension and points up his own supreme assurance. As if by right, McCartney takes the jewels in tonight's crown: He leads Harrison's serene masterpiece "All Things Must Pass" and two of the best Beatles songs: the plangent ballad "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," for which Clapton re-creates the

Nearly every living musician Harrison played with is here tonight.



guitar part he played on the original; and "Something," played solo by McCartney on Harrison's beloved ukulele. (In a curious irony, Harrison's best-known song is about Patti Boyd, the woman who left him for Clapton, his best friend. Clapton's prominent role tonight is a reminder of how fully the two men repaired their relationship.)

Not even born when these songs were recorded, the 24-year-old Dhani — who looks

uncannily like his father circa 1968 — leads the group through Harrison's spiritual anthem "My Sweet Lord." McCartney relates a comment from Olivia Harrison: "With Dhani onstage, it looks like George stayed young and we all grew old."

The show's climax is something utterly unexpected yet brilliantly well-chosen. Joe Brown, the least starry guest, closes the night with a sweet and simple love song from 1924. Performed on ukulele and apparently a favorite of Harrison's, "I'll See You in My Dreams" is truly moving. Gradually, almost 100 musicians and singers congregate behind Brown to bring both the number and the night to a poignant conclusion — precisely what the Quiet Beatle would have liked. *PAUL DU NOYER*

HOW'D YOU LIKE THE SHOW? ROYAL ALBERT HALL, NOVEMBER 29, 2002



EMMA DOLLIMORE

25, INSURANCE UNDERWRITER, NORTH WALES

"Although it was a memorial of George's death, it was made a happy occasion by fantastic performers. McCartney and Clapton were the best."



SARAH RILEY AND PHIL BARR

20, STUDENT, RHODE ISLAND; 21, STUDENT, RHODE ISLAND

Phil: "An absolutely wonderful tribute." Sarah: "It captured the way George bridged East and West in his music."



PETER NIELSEN

46, JOURNALIST, COLORADO

"I loved every moment of it. It was very moving. Paul McCartney's voice was good, and seeing him and Ringo Starr onstage together was fantastic."



MICHAEL AND SARAH NUSLAN

51, MOTION-PICTURE PRODUCER, NEW JERSEY; 18, STUDENT, NEW JERSEY

Michael: "I loved it. I've been waiting a lifetime to see something like this." Sarah: "Amazing."

Kelly Osbourne:
As seen on TV. A lot.



Ozzy's Girl

Everyone's obnoxious kid sister kicks off her first tour, surrounded by lots of TV cameras, naturally

KELLY OSBOURNE

IRVING PLAZA, NEW YORK

NOVEMBER 26, 2002 ★★

» THIS EVENT IS BEING VIDEOTAPED, warns a large sign in the foyer of New York's Irving Plaza. Well, like, duh! Of course it's being videotaped. Having spent the last 18 months recording every one of the Osbourne family's triumphs, tragedies and tantrums, MTV is not going to miss taping the first proper concert by daughter Kelly.

Indeed, since there are almost as many video cameramen as there are people in the crowd, this evening seems less like a gig than a hall of mirrors reflecting various members of the media back at one another to infinity. Up in the VIP balcony, papa Ozzy is being taped for a future episode of *The Osbournes* as he watches the premiere episode of the show's second

season, during which Kelly and brother Jack argue over the lineup of her backing band — which, in the real world, is waiting offstage.

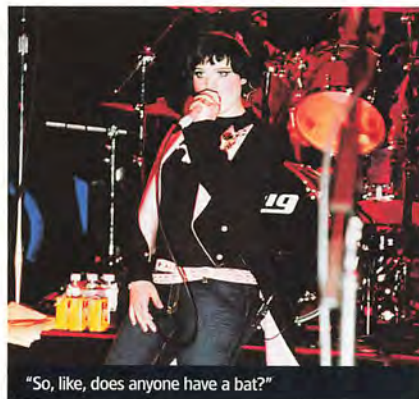
After a suitably bleepable introduction ("New York fuckin' City, join me in welcoming..."), Kelly bounces onstage and rips into the opening number, "Disconnected," like someone who was born to perform — which, in many ways, she was.

Throughout her 40-minute set, she resembles old man Ozzy as much as Julian Lennon resembles his father or Jeff Buckley resembled his. True, such new-wavey femme-rock tunes as "Contradiction" don't sound like any music the old bat-biter has ever chewed on (although her snarling "You say I should do it differently/But I don't necessarily agree" sounds familiarly

hostile). But her stage posture — bowed head, geriatric hunching of shoulders — is pure Oz.

Kelly has also inherited the ability to remain at one with the audience, and she spends a good deal of time shaking the hands of the many Kelly-alikes in the crowd. She may have recently admitted to splurging her first MTV check on a \$75,000 watch, but as the 18-year-old belts out torn-from-her-diary lyrics or drags a couple of audience members onstage to help her on "Papa Don't Preach," she exudes normalcy. Even when the sweat-soaked singer announces that her next song, "Too Much of You," is about masturbation — something few teenagers, or anyone for that matter, would announce in front of their parents — the declaration comes across as homey rather than weird.

Unfortunately, that ordinariness extends to her singing, which sometimes deteriorates into an off-key bellow. Her band wipes zit cream on the vocal blemishes, particularly the thunderous drumming of Alicia Warrington (whose presence indicates that Jack prevailed in the should-there-be-chicks-in-the-band debate). And when the group returns for an encore-reprise of "Shut Up," a petulant, staccato song that presents Kelly as the younger sister the Ramones never had, even a cynic would admit that, while she's not the best singer in the world — or even in her own family — Kelly's performance has not disgraced the Osbourne name. Then again, it's difficult to imagine what could. CLARK COLLIS



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> In no time, the uptight Beckinsale gets aroused by the lure of infidelity.

THE GOOD!

SEXUAL PERVERSITY IN L.A.!

Doctors and rockers smokin', drinkin', screwin' and fightin' — trouble in paradise never looked so good. By Ted Lambert

LAUREL CANYON

DIRECTED BY Lisa Cholodenko

STARRING Frances McDormand, Christian Bale, Kate Beckinsale, Alessandro Nivola, Natascha McElhone

>> SEX, DRUGS, rock & roll and fresh-squeezed OJ — orange juice, not Simpson — make up the four elements of the Los Angeles lifestyle. And *Laurel Canyon* so perfectly captures the sunny, laid-back, infuriating atmosphere of La-La Land that viewers can almost smell the sweet smoke drifting from the lips of a foul-mouthed earth mother — played to the hilt by Frances McDormand.

Frances McDormand? Talk about a turnaround. The last great rock & roll movie, *Almost Famous*, found her as the teenage hero's domineering, rock record-hating mom. Now she's done a weird 180 as the stoned record-producer mother of a young hospital psychiatrist (Christian Bale) who's moved temporarily from Harvard Yard into her hillside mansion with his fiancée (Kate Beckinsale). Bale wants to sleep, Beckinsale wants to study — and all McDormand wants to do is have some fun, smoke a joint by the pool and finish recording an album with the unnamed Coldplay-style British band overrunning her house.

In no time, the uptight easterners get aroused by the lure of infidelity. While Beckinsale hones her doctoral dissertation (on the sex life of fruit flies), the sensitive-guy songs in the garden-level studio

lure her relationship toward the rocks. And Bale starts spending perhaps a little too much time in his Volvo with a sultry doctor, the flirtatious Natascha McElhone. Pretty soon, McDormand and her blond Brit boyfriend (Alessandro Nivola), the band's lead singer, seduce Beckinsale together in the pool.

Director Lisa Cholodenko's sophomore effort doesn't neatly resolve Bale's family and premarital tensions. But hey — the band isn't bad at all. And in a movie full of California dreamin', McDormand's hard-nosed, wilting flower child could make even a proper Bostonian fall hard for L.A.



McDormand: Dude looks like a lady!

"HELLO, CLEVELAND!"

Hollywood's invented tons of bands. Here are the greatest!

SPINAL TAP

(THIS IS SPINAL TAP, 1984)

These Where-Are-They-Now?—file habitués go to 11. Hooray!

CITIZEN DICK

(SINGLES, 1992)

These Seattle grungesters are fronted by a filthy Matt Dillon. Boo!

THE BLUES BROTHERS

(THE BLUES BROTHERS, 1980)

They came. They raised the roof. They ordered four fried chickens and a Coke.

STILLWATER

(ALMOST FAMOUS, 2000)

A hirsute fusion of every band writer—



Spinal Tap: "Who's up for red snapper?"

director Cameron Crowe interviewed in the '70s.

OTIS DAY AND THE KNIGHTS

(ANIMAL HOUSE, 1978)

Wellllllll — you know you make me wanna throw a drunken frat-house formal!

THE SOGGY BOTTOM BOYS

(O BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU?, 2000)

They sparked a bluegrass frenzy in Mississippi, 1935. And in the Virgin Megastore, 2001.

THE COMMITMENTS

(THE COMMITMENTS, 1991)

The greatest soul group ever! Well, the greatest imaginary, white, Irish soul group ever!



The Blues Brothers: They traveled light.



THE BAD!

DARK BLUE

DIRECTED BY Ron Shelton

STARRING Kurt Russell, Brendan Gleeson, Scott Speedman, Michael Michele, Ving Rhames

THERE OUGHTA BE a law! In any decent cop movie, the hero knows whether he's a good guy or a bad guy. So do the viewers. But Kurt Russell's brash, bourbon-swilling detective has no idea, even as he's shooting unarmed crooks and abusing his partner (who's also his nephew). And the audience is supposed to root for this scumbag! Even worse, this story, set around the explosive 1992 Rodney King verdict, cynically plays the L.A. riots and racial tensions in the LAPD as nothing but trivial scenery. Russell is serious hero material, and he deserves better than this morally, socially, racially confused dreck.



& THE INDIE!

CHAOS

DIRECTED BY Coline Serreau

STARRING Rachida Brakni, Catherine Frot, Vincent Lindon, Aurelien Wiik

IT TAKES A French chef to cook up such a deliciously perverse soufflé of nasty behavior in the bedrooms and hospital wards of Paris. In *Chaos*, a bored, wealthy middle-aged couple witness the brutal beating of an Algerian prostitute. The husband merely wipes her blood off his windshield — *sacre bleu!* — but the wife resolves to secretly help nurse the victim back to health and then exact retribution against the pimps who enslave her and everyone else who pisses them off. Equal parts revenge thriller, sex comedy and loopy con game, *Chaos* thrives on one universal premise: Guys can be *such* jerks!

Blender Approved

The best movies of the last three months



GANGS OF NEW YORK

In Martin Scorsese's \$100 million-plus epic, knife-fighting New Yorkers are wilder than anyone in the Wild West.



NARC

Shoot first, get your story straight later: Detectives Ray Liotta and Jason Patric track a cop killer in chilly, chilling Detroit.

LAST GOOD MOVIE YOU SAW?



MYA
R&B chanteuse now singing in *Chicago*

"BOWLING FOR Columbine. The best movie I saw all year. I had no clue how many handgun murders there were in the U.S. It opened my eyes."

AND THE REST...

DON'T MISS



DAREDEVIL

DIRECTED BY Mark Steven Johnson

STARRING Ben Affleck, Michael Clarke Duncan, Colin Farrell, Jon Favreau, Jennifer Garner

THE PITCH A lawyer loses his sight but gains radar, letting him battle nighttime crime.

THE VERDICT Thought *Spider-Man* was kids' stuff? This faithful screen version of the Marvel Comics cult favorite is far darker than last summer's smash, and full of acrobatic fighting.



HYPNOTIC

DIRECTED BY Nick Willing

STARRING Goran Visnjic, Shirley Henderson, Miranda Otto

THE PITCH A hypnotist with an ability to read his patients' minds helps a policewoman solve a string of ritualistic child murders.

THE VERDICT ESP and occult angles, like a 500-year-old villain, give this thriller genuine suspense. But be warned — it also features some bloody torture. Hang onto your popcorn!



SPUN

DIRECTED BY Jonas Åkerlund

STARRING Jason Schwartzman, Brittany Murphy, John Leguizamo, Mena Suvari, Mickey Rourke

THE PITCH Skanky L.A. dealers and customers tweak on speed, drive around, tweak, drive...

THE VERDICT Video director Åkerlund serves a stylish, ugly trip. But after watching Murphy and Schwartzman binge on meth and chatter incessantly, you'll be grinding your teeth too.

DON'T RUSH



HE LOVES ME HE LOVES ME NOT

DIRECTED BY Laetitia Colombani

STARRING Audrey Tautou, Samuel Le Bihan

THE PITCH A married doctor falls in love with a younger woman — or does he? A tale told twice, with his-and-hers viewpoints.

THE VERDICT Warning: twists ahead! The second act gets all *Sixth Sense* on us, making us doubt the "facts." A surprisingly sharp role for Tautou, heroine of the sugary *Amélie*.



DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY

DIRECTED BY George Gallo and Eddie Griffin

STARRING Eddie Griffin

THE PITCH The star of 2002's *Undercover Brother* returns to Kansas City, Missouri, to visit relatives, pester white-bread pedestrians and wow his hometown audience.

THE VERDICT Griffin's a master mimic and a keen social observer, but he puts the "routine" in "standup routine." (Sample setup: *What would Bill Cosby say if he became — a pimp??*)

DON'T BOTHER



CITY OF GHOSTS

DIRECTED BY Matt Dillon

STARRING Matt Dillon, James Caan, Stellan Skarsgård, Gérard Depardieu, Natascha McElhone

THE PITCH A New York con man searches for his mysterious boss in Cambodia's bars and brothels — and becomes his new patsy.

THE VERDICT Dillon's messy directorial debut endures wacky expats and a confusing plot. At least Caan sings karaoke in the local tongue!



24 Hour Party People: Steve Coogan and Shirley Henderson wonder why so few friends attend their "chair parties."

JOY DIVISION!

It's *Blender's* movie of 2002. By Clark Collis

24 HOUR PARTY PEOPLE

DIRECTED BY
Michael Winterbottom

STARRING
Steve Coogan, Shirley Henderson,
Paddy Considine, Sean Harris

MGM/UA HOME VIDEO

★★★★★

» "THERE'S NO SUCCESS like failure." Bob Dylan said that, but Tony Wilson would doubtless agree. In late-'70s Manchester, England, Wilson founded Factory Records, the most influential British indie label in history but also a failure by any reasonable business yardstick, despite a talent roster that included Joy Division, New Order and the Happy Mondays.

The Mondays' tendency to smoke as much crack as possible while recording in the Bahamas, ultimately bankrupting the label, was but one embodiment of Wilson's fiscal idiocy. This screw-up (and many, many, many others) is hilariously re-created in Michael Winterbottom's comic corporate biopic *24 Hour Party*

Steve Coogan is never far from an outburst of pompous buffoonery.



People. Made with the full co-operation of its subjects, *Party People* revels in their disasters.

Indeed, Wilson, as perfectly portrayed by British comedian Steve Coogan, is never far from an outburst of pompous buffoonery, repeatedly comparing Happy Mondays lyricist Shaun Ryder to the poet W.B. Yeats. But the joke isn't always on Wilson. Early on, in one of many scenes addressing the camera directly, Coogan advises viewers that if we don't understand his reference to Icarus, that's OK — "but you should definitely read more."

Those familiar with Factory's fall from the sun will delight in the commentaries and cameos from assorted Manchester rock veterans like the Buzzcocks' Howard Devoto (and even Tony Wilson, as a TV producer exasperated with Coogan's Wilson). Winterbottom's cinematic *joie de vivre* and Wilson's universal fuck-you (and fuck-himself) attitude are so appealing that even viewers who know nothing about Wilson or Factory should find plenty to enjoy. After all, as Coogan points out, Factory Records was not really a record company but an "experiment in human nature." Unlike Factory, *Party People* is a hugely successful one.

BLUE CRUSH

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS HOME VIDEO

★★

Blonde beauty Kate Bosworth stars as a hardcore surfer in this grrrrl-power movie that happens also to be a flagrant opportunity to get hot chicks into bikinis. Sadly, the lame, surprise-free result is *Flashdance-by-the-Sea*, saved only by surf sequences so brilliantly shot you'll feel the sand in your underwear. Includes deleted scenes and a director's commentary.

CLARISSA LASKY

THE BOURNE IDENTITY

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS HOME VIDEO

★★★

Back when Doug "Swingers" Liman was indie film's golden boy, who'd have dreamed he would later direct big-budget spy thrillers? Still, Liman's adaptation of Robert Ludlum's yarn about an amnesiac assassin (Matt Damon) is a lot better than you might expect — and it certainly wipes the floor with Damon pal Ben Affleck's effort in the genre, last summer's *The Sum of All Fears*. Includes an alternate ending and (somewhat unexpectedly) a Moby video.

THE COMPLETE MUSKETEERS

ANCHOR BAY

★★★

Richard Lester's two Musketeers movies were originally conceived as a vehicle for the Beatles, stars of Lester's madcap *A Hard Day's Night*. Insane though that may sound, it couldn't have been any more unhinged than the movies he actually made, which find Charlton Heston, Raquel Welch,



Fear and Loathing: Johnny Depp gets typecast. Ha!



Fear Dot Com: "Did I turn the stove off?"

Michael York and Brit comic Spike Milligan cavorting around *la vieille France* in a style that's two parts Benny Hill, one part Robert Altman.

FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS

CRITERION

★★

A disaster — as any adaptation of Hunter S. Thompson's narco-crazed book was bound to be — but at least it's an honorably gonzo one. Benicio del Toro piled on the pounds to play Thompson's lawyer in this 1998 movie, but it's Johnny Depp's portrayal of the drug-gobbling journalist that begs your attention, if only because his accent renders him utterly incomprehensible. Includes commentary from Depp, del Toro and director Terry Gilliam — but not, sadly, Alex Cox, who'd been shitcanned from the director's chair.

FEAR DOT COM

WARNER HOME VIDEO

★

A shameless ripoff of *The Ring* (or, more accurately, of *Ringu*, the original

Blender Approved

The best DVDs of the last three months



THE KING OF COMEDY

20TH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT

Martin Scorsese's oddest movie — featuring Robert De Niro as a frustrated comic who kidnaps Jerry Lewis — seems more prescient every day.



DAVID BOWIE: GREATEST HITS

VIRGIN

The Thin White Duke's early videos are straightforward, elegant affairs, despite his wardrobe, seemingly stolen from a Martian transvestite.

Japanese horror movie). But rather than a haunted, homicidal videotape, *Fear Dot Com* features a haunted, homicidal Web site. It also features Stephen Dorff, Udo Kier, *Re-Animator*'s Jeffrey Combs and a script so lazy you wonder how the son of a bitch dragged itself to the set. Be bored — be very, very bored.

THE GOOD GIRL

20TH CENTURY FOX HOME VIDEO

★★★

It may sound like faint praise to say that the best thing about a movie is Jennifer Aniston's performance. And *The Good Girl*'s tragicomic mix of supermarkets, stoners and sex surely deserves only the faintest of praise. But Aniston's turn as a married discount-store clerk who plays Mrs. Robinson to Jake Gyllenhaal's cow-eyed rebel is a genuine revelation. And it's a reminder that only one *Friend* has a serious shot at being a Hollywood star — and it sure as shit ain't David Schwimmer. With nine deleted scenes.

THE HARDER THEY COME THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL EDITION

XENON ENTERTAINMENT

★★★★

Boasting one of the great tag lines of all time — "With a piece in his hand he takes on the man!" — this gritty reggae-splottation flick stands as one of the best music movies ever made. A lot of credit must go to Jimmy Cliff's turn as a singer-cum-gangster, but the real star is the classic reggae soundtrack, featuring Toots & the Maytals' "Pressure Drop" and Cliff's own defiant title track.

ONE HOUR PHOTO

20TH CENTURY FOX HOME VIDEO

★★★

In which Robin Williams portrays lonely, unhappy, family-stalking, photo-



Road to Perdition: Tom Hanks participates in "Take Your Kid to the Hat Store Day."

developing drone Uncle Sy with an unnerving stillness that, if it didn't go against all accepted natural laws, could actually be described as "subtle." While the tension fizzles out in the final act, the film remains a worthy off-kilter follow-up to music-video auteur Mark Romanek's loopy, apocalyptic 1985 debut, *Static* (not to mention his dark visions for Nine Inch Nails' "Closer"). Includes commentary from Williams and Romanek.

ROAD TO PERDITION

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS HOME VIDEO

★★★

Featuring the combined talents of Tom Hanks, Paul Newman, Jude Law, Jennifer Jason Leigh and *American Beauty* director Sam Mendes — combined Oscar nominations: one zillion! — this Prohibition-era gangster movie hopes that you'll be sufficiently distracted by its dazzling star wattage to overlook the flimsiness of its plot, adapted from Max Allan Collins's graphic novel, which could be summarized on a matchbook with room to spare for something — anything! — a bit more interesting.



Blue Crush: The stars try to figure out the film's appeal.

MUSIC DVDS BY ROB KEMP



THE MILES DAVIS STORY

COLUMBIA MUSIC VIDEO

★★★★

An unflinching look back at the trumpeter who changed the course of jazz throughout his 50-year career (despite looking and talking just like Gollum from *The Lord of the Rings*). There are lurid distractions (Davis's first wife, Frances, tells interviewers she ran for her life after several cocaine-induced beatings by her husband in the '60s), but this thrilling set of live footage and testimony from such protégés as Herbie Hancock attests to Davis's painterly way with melody that's unrivaled 12 years after his death.



PAUL MCCARTNEY: BACK IN THE U.S.

CAPITOL

★★★★

The world's richest musician got richer on last summer's Back in the U.S. tour. This doc finds Sir Paul talkin' veggies and land mines amidst footage of his band grooving on his 40-year songbook with real glee, as when gigantic drummer Abe Laboriel Jr. flails through "Let Me Roll It."



LENNY KRAVITZ: LENNY LIVE

VIRGIN

★★★

"Whenever I talk to a musician, they wanna hear this bullshit about where I hang out!" The trouble with Lenny Kravitz's lament, on this rote scrapbook of his 2002 tour, is that his idea of insight is that his bassist "really holds the band down." Such interruptions ruin any pleasures of the live tracks, like a torrid "Are You Gonna Go My Way."



KRUSH GROOVE

WARNER HOME VIDEO

★★★★

Before there was *8 Mile*, there was *Krush Groove*. Just as Eminem's recent bio-fable mythologized the rapper's rise, this vastly corny 1985 quickie fictionalizes the early days of Run-DMC, Run's brother Russell Simmons and his label, Def Jam. The film debuts of LL Cool J and the Beasties are good reasons to watch; the inane script is not.



GILLIAN WELCH: THE REVELATOR COLLECTION

ACONY

★★★★

Singer-songwriter Welch has revived '30s-style mountain music for the NPR crowd on three albums since 1996. On this handsome set of live tracks and videos, she performs gorgeous bluegrass and talks in a twang (odd, since she was raised in L.A. by parents who wrote music for TV).



THE POLICE: ROCK MASTERS

IMAGE ENTERTAINMENT

★★★★

This no-frills, public-access-quality video depicts the Police on the verge of worldwide superstardom, playing their airy reggae-rock for a bunch of mildly enthusiastic British college students at a 1979 gig. The band was yet to gain its confidence, as this video proves with an awkward first public performance of "Message in a Bottle."



Diana Ross got her big break while working as Marvin Gaye's masseuse.

BAD COMPANY

So Motown Records sucked. But what about the *music*?
By Stuart Maconie

MOTOWN MUSIC, MONEY, SEX AND POWER

By Gerald Posner

RANDOM HOUSE, \$26

★★★

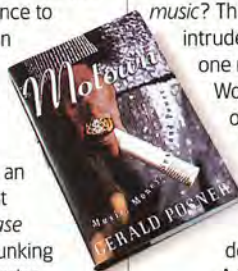
➤➤ MARVIN GAYE once called Motown a "loving Gestapo," and pundits have since spent thousands of words trying to echo his tidy summary. The eternal paradox at Motown's core is that an enterprise that brought such joy and exuberance to the world could be run with all the carefree abandon of a Detroit auto factory.

Gerald Posner's considerable clout as an investigative journalist stems largely from *Case Closed*, his feisty debunking of the conspiracy theories surrounding John F. Kennedy's murder. Which is apt, as much of *Motown: Music, Money, Sex and Power* amounts to sustained, slo-mo character assassination of Motown founder Berry Gordy. The Motown story is Gordy's story, and Posner approaches his subject with all the generosity of spirit of John Lennon's trashographer, Albert Goldman, painting Gordy

as avaricious, self-deluded, tin-eared and violent.

Of course, many of Posner's details are hair-raising. He makes the scandalous claims that Mary Wells needed Gordy's signature to access her own bank account, and that Teena Marie earned \$2 million for Motown but was paid \$100 a week for almost seven years. But his point that Motown's gold discs were spray-painted vinyl is an industry cliché, not a punishable offense.

Money, sex, power... and *music*? That detail barely intrudes here — there's not one mention of Stevie Wonder's *Talking Book* or *Fulfillingness' First Finale*. If you didn't know, you might think that Motown sold light bulbs or dog food — or, yes, cars. A Motown history that overlooks the miserable and squalid in Gordy's legacy tells only half the story — but so does one that ignores the heroism and romance of the company's victory over racism and class bigotry, and the ageless beauty and significance of the music it produced. As far as he goes, Posner tells it like it is. But Motown was, and is, so much more.



THE CLASH RETURN OF THE LAST GANG IN TOWN

By Marcus Gray

★★★ HAL LEONARD, \$19

"The Clash genuinely wanted to embody the myth that was growing around them," writes British author Marcus Gray, "but to do so essentially involved living a lie." Gray's overhauled 1995 bio often

illustrates the gap between the band's subversive rhetoric and its reality: Singer-guitarist Joe Strummer, who died in December, struck a street posture that belied his private-school education. It's a point worth making, but Gray's forensic nitpicking (426 pages of ephemera, set in tiny type) seems neurotic, and counters the visceral thrills of the music.

JOHN HARRIS

ELVIS PRESLEY

By Bobbie Ann Mason

★★★★ VIKING PRESS, \$20

After the 2002 Presley deluge, Kentucky novelist Bobbie Ann Mason delivers a short, deeply felt biography from the Penguin Lives Series. She captures his true wonder and tragedy, from

the dazzling youth to the worn-out soul who, in 1976, scribbled a note on Las Vegas hotel stationery: "I have no need for all of this. Help me Lord." Mason's last, lingering images are of Colonel Tom Parker turning up at Graceland in a Hawaiian shirt the day after Presley's death — and wearing a baseball cap at his funeral.

PHIL SUTCLIFFE

JAMES BROWN THE GODFATHER OF SOUL

By James Brown with Bruce Tucker

★★★ THUNDER'S MOUTH PRESS, \$15

James Brown once meant more than high-speed joyrides on PCP, back when his funky, sweaty 1960s shows made him an urban hero. His 1986 memoir (reissued with an intro by Reverend Al Sharpton, his hair apparent) recounts his ascent



with humility, recalling such woes as losing his son in a 1973 car wreck and owing the IRS millions in back taxes. Brown enjoyed a brief mid-'80s comeback, giving this book an upbeat ending that's been negated by concurrent six-year prison sentences for battery and weapons charges.

MITCH MYERS

SHE'S A REBEL THE HISTORY OF WOMEN IN ROCK & ROLL

By Gillian G. Gaar

★★★ SEAL PRESS, \$20

Can there really be *anything* to add about women in rock? The very existence of Gillian G. Gaar's *She's a Rebel*, now expanded from its 1992 edition, supports the condescending ghettoization it tries to debunk. Gaar reels through the years from Big Mama Thornton's pre-Elvis "Hound Dog" up to the punk-metal of the Donnas, listing more songs and dates than a brain can bear — a humorlessly encyclopedic approach that's anything but fun. (She does get in one zinger: that Janis Joplin was once voted Ugliest Man on Campus.) Women rockers still do struggle for respect — look at Yoko Ono, who wrote *Rebel's* new preface. But so much proof amounts to way too much of a good thing.

APRIL LONG

WALK THIS WAY THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AEROSMITH

By Aerosmith with Stephen Davis

★★★★ HARPERCOLLINS, \$15

Once the definitive tale of a band's rise and fall (and post-rehab rise), Aerosmith's 1997 autobiography now reads like a PG-13 version of Motley Crüe's skanky 2001 history, *The Dirt*. But the reissued *Walk This Way* was written by a band that had shelved any bitterness. Not that *Walk This Way* is exactly short on gonzo behavior, especially during the coked-up late '70s (or, as Aerosmith refer to them, "The Wonder Years" — as in, they "wonder" what happened to them). "The crew had a rule," recalls Joe Perry's guitar tech. "If you didn't see a band member for 24 hours, you broke down the door of the hotel





Steven Tyler gets the hang of bubblegum.

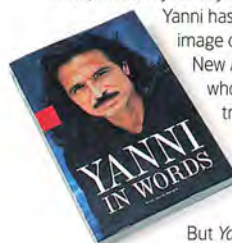
room to see if they were alive."
CLARK COLLIS

YANNI IN WORDS

By Yanni with David Rensin

☆☆ MIRAMAX BOOKS, \$25

Yanni, we hardly knew ye! Since 1986,



Yanni has had the image of a mulleted New Age master whose keyboard treacle soothes spa visitors and dental patients.

But *Yanni in Words*, timed to promote a massive world tour kicking off in March, proves he wasn't always such a wuss. Young Yiannis Chrysomallis was a studly Greek swimming champ who lost his virginity at age 13 to a hooker's hummer. After college in Minnesota in the early '70s, he toured in prog-rock bands, dabbling in drugs and diddling groupies — once slipping off to the van for a blow job during a drum solo. But *In Words'* easygoing first half falls apart after

HARDCORE TROUBADOUR

THE LIFE AND NEAR DEATH OF STEVE EARLE

By Lauren St. John

☆☆☆☆

FOURTH ESTATE IN AMERICA, \$27

The most politically conscious songwriter today isn't Broooce but a onetime smack addict from Texas whose third wife



visited a crack house one Easter morning to end their marriage. (Her hubby's response: "OK, fuckin' leave me here.") Steve Earle's heart-breaking story is one long slide from honky-tonk hero to the next "next Bruce Springsteen" to the crack dens of south Nashville to a harrowing two-month prison detox. Earle, now clean and sober, gave Zimbabwe-born biographer Lauren St. John unlimited access; admirably, she refuses to beatify her subject, showing us a brilliant performer, passionate activist, abusive husband, neglectful father and selfish, insecure jerk. *Hardcore Troubadour* reads like a *Behind the Music* episode written by Joseph Conrad.

NEAL POLLACK

1989, when Yanni began a nine-year romance with the actress Linda Evans. What was good for his career was bad for this memoir, which settles into a litany of contract disputes and red tape.

SAM JEMIELITY

Blender Approved

The best books of the last three months



TROPICAL TRUTH

By Caetano Veloso

KNOPF

Veloso, Brazil's biggest pop star and a subversive political activist, recounts a life of music, style and hallucinogens.

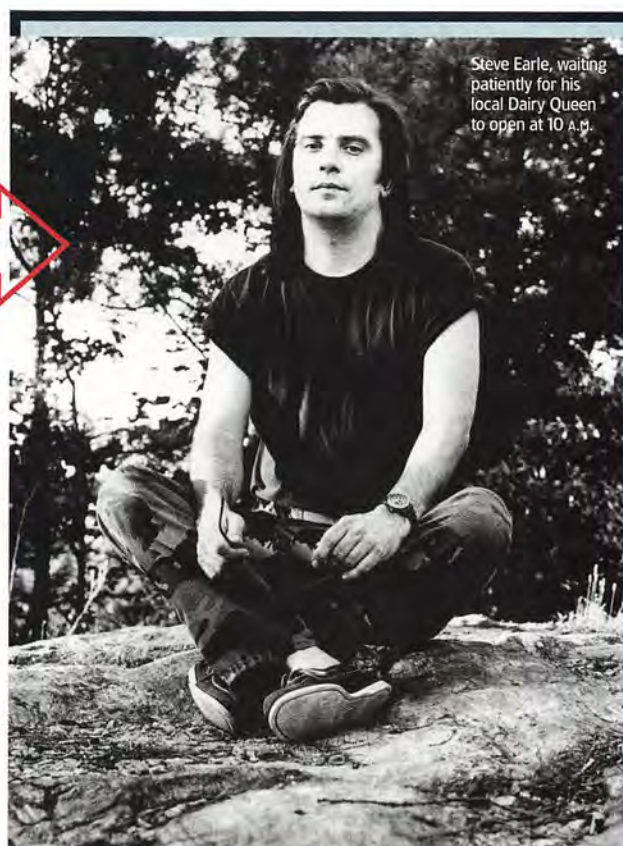


TOUGHER THAN LEATHER

By Bill Adler

CONSAFOS

Run-DMC's 1987 bio, reissued tragically after Jam Master Jay's murder.



Steve Earle, waiting patiently for his local Dairy Queen to open at 10 a.m.

THE BEST PART OF A BIG BOOK!

Sydney, 1990. **Steve Earle**, slumming on tour, meets a hooker who scores him curiously strong smack! But his appetite terrifies her...

IN SYDNEY, the band stayed at the Sebal Townhouse in Kings Cross, the city's eclectic, electric red-light district... They stayed there, partied there and indulged in all manner of excesses there... [Earle] and [bandmate] Bucky Baxter hit Kings Cross in earnest. They walked through streets packed with revellers, past flickering XXX signs advertising strip joints and peep shows. Soon a smartly dressed woman approached Steve. She had the groomed, straitlaced appearance of a bank teller.

"Are you Steve Earle?" she asked.

"Yeah," he drawled. He knew immediately what she was doing.

She came to his room regularly with "the best dope in the world."



... He could see that that was her hook, looking like Anne Murray, all wholesome and in a suit.

"What are you doing?" she asked him.

"I'm looking for dope."

"Well, no problem."

Baxter was startled. "What are you doing?" he said to the woman.

"I'm a whore," she told him cheerfully.

Steve recruited her to cop for him (not, as [his sister] Stacey put it, for social reasons) and she came to his room regularly with "the best dope in the world," heroin so strong he almost died. "God, I worry about you," she told him one morning when she knocked on the door to find he had already gone through the A\$50 bag she'd brought him the night before.

Excerpted from the book *Hardcore Troubadour: The Life and Near Death of Steve Earle*. Copyright © 2002 by Lauren St. John. Published by Fourth Estate. Reprinted by permission.

CRANK IT!

P.O.D., Blink-182, Weezer — remix their music for points, then play it back with the hottie guitarist of your dreams. By Alex Porter

AMPLITUDE

SONY — PS2

★★★★

➤ SAY YOU'RE THE type whose ultimate fantasy is climbing up into the DJ booth, seamlessly fusing classic hits and new tunes with your boundless imagination and making an entire dance floor groove for hours. You don't have to hit the clubs to work your magic — an inventive video game lets you slam your opponents in extemporaneous remixing battles.

Amplitude is a cyberspace oddity, a budding DJ's dream. It takes a bunch of popular songs — cuts by David Bowie, Weezer, Blink-182, Garbage, even Herbie Hancock — and lets players compete to manipulate their drum, vocal, bass and guitar tracks (not to mention those annoying copyright laws).

The game begins as players "remix" onscreen characters from several gender,

head and costume choices, including alien heads and gas masks. The new characters travel down a trippy cyberspace freeway, divided into lanes that represent a song's instrumental and vocal tracks. Players remix the music by shooting at floating jewels.

Enough accurate shots, and you'll have the power over your competitors. But slow fingers will sting more than the humiliation of freezing up in a fierce Detroit hip-hop battle.

Amplitude works best in multiplayer and online modes. Four players can grab for points on one screen, using the controller sticks to mess around with tempo, pitch and scratching. Online mode provides fiercer play: In cyberspace, nobody knows if he's playing against the Chemical Brothers.

Are 25 tracks enough to keep players obsessed? Maybe not, but Amplitude's got enough seizure-inducing activity to satisfy most pseudo DJs. At least until Amplitude: The Remix.

ALL SHOOK UP!

The greatest remixes of the past 20 years

"A LITTLE LESS CONVERSATION" (2002)
Elvis Presley gets up to speed, proving he has never really left the building.
DJ: **JUNKIE XL**

"A STROKE OF GENIUS" (2001)
Christina Aguilera sings "Genie in a Bottle" for the Strokes — they wish!
DJ: **FREELANCE HELLRAISER**



O.J. SIMPSON (1994)
A middle-aged athlete-actor fumbles, then recovers the limelight. Sort of. What was he thinking?
DJ: **MC BLOODY GLOVE**

THE BERLIN WALL (1989)
How to turn the Cold War into souvenirs: Just add sledgehammers!
DJs: **HORDES OF THRILLED, DRUNK GERMANS**

NEW COKE (1985)
"Yo, dudes — why don't we take the best-loved product in the world and fuck it up almost beyond repair!" "Yeaah, dude!"
DJs: **THE COCA-COLA CO.**

MICHAEL JACKSON (1984 TO PRESENT)
Jacko's had more faces than Madonna's had partners. Our hats are off!
DJs: **THE PLASTIC-SURGERY COMMUNITY**



Just after finishing this bass solo, she fired her hairstylist.



UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP II

INFOGRAMES — XBOX

Aim. Shoot. Kill. Repeat. This explosive twitchfest with slamming graphics reaches new heights with an option to talk trash online through a headset. Choose from 45 characters with special attributes, and jump into death matches or bombing runs. Some contests require tag-teaming — others are every-killer-for-himself. ★★★★★



DISASTER REPORT

AGETEC — PC, PS2

Why watch calamities on CNN when you can report on them? You're a journalist battling the wrath of an earthquake, solving puzzles and helping a partner negotiate the urban wreckage. (And you'll uncover plenty of clues to bolster your foul-play theory.) You may not get a memoir out of it, but dammit, the story still has to run at 11! ★★★★★



PANZER DRAGON ORTA

SEGA — XBOX

Once upon a time in a mythic land (etc., etc.), a cute girlie named Orta led her rebel forces against the Oppressor, shooting enemy vessels while flying around on a big-ass dragon. Panzer Dragoon's got loads of fast, explosive action, and periodic "Berserk Mode" attacks fill the screen with all the pyrotechnics of a Kiss concert. ★★★★★



HAVEN: CALL OF THE KING

MIDWAY — PS2, XBOX, GAMECUBE

Zoiks! Evil overlord Vetch has enslaved your people and infected them with a virus, and as Haven, you search for an antidote to free your peeps. The play is wildly varied, with racing, sleuthing and bonking the baddies with your powerful yo-yo. But tedious stretches may make turning this game off feel liberating. ★★★

Blender Approved

The best games of the last three months



RESIDENT EVIL ZERO

CAPCOM — GAMECUBE

Another round of biological horror and zombie attacks to grip you like a can of anthrax. With leeches, maggots, oozing flesh — Mommy!



IMPOSSIBLE CREATURES

MICROSOFT — PC

Yikes! Battle a rogue scientist with an army of creatures built from spare parts, like a cobra-leopard mutation or a friendly scorpion-baboon.

WIN THIS SONY PLAYSTATION 2!

➤➤ **GOOD GOD, Y'ALL!** It's a free Sony PlayStation 2, the world's greatest studying-prevention device! And we're throwing in Konami's DDRMAX Dance Dance Revolution and a DDR controller. Solve this puzzle and read the rules at blender.com, and get your contact info to us by March 4, 2003. We'll choose a winner at random from correct entries received and post each winner's name (and the previous puzzle's solution) at blender.com/crossword.

Send your completed puzzle to Blender Puzzle Contest, 1040 Avenue of the Americas, 22nd floor, New York, New York 10018.



PENCIL ME IN!

Hey, it's *Blender's* crossword!
Starring 2 Down!

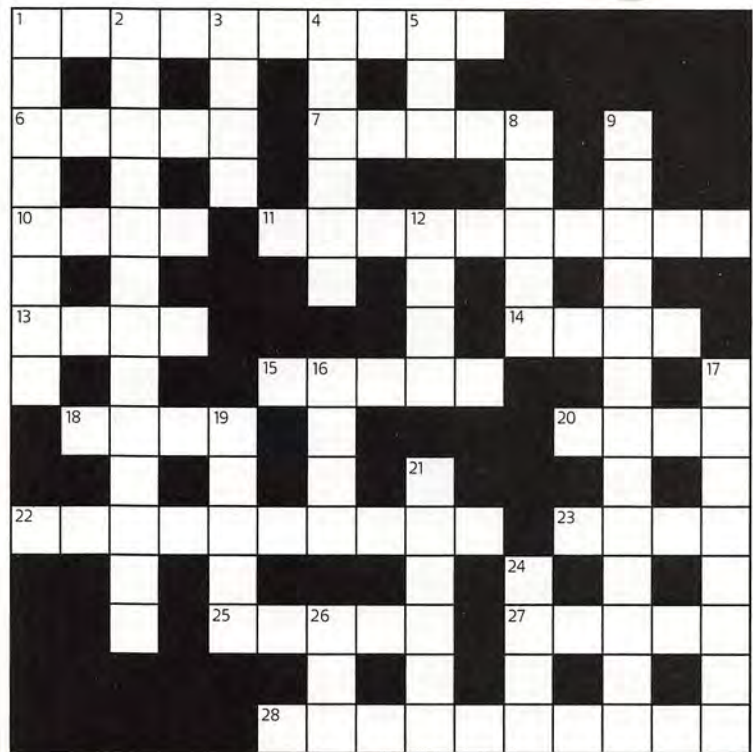
BY BRENDAN QUIGLEY

ACROSS

- 1 Soundgarden Against the Machine?
- 6 Nirvana's final album, *In* _____
- 7 Wu-Tang Killah Bees' 1998 debut: *The* _____ Vol. 1
- 10 The Canadian cowgirl who spells her name in lowercase
- 11 This quintet played with "Kryptonite" in 2000 (three words)
- 13 Hair-metal hitmakers with "Round and Round"
- 14 The disco hit that advises: "Young man! There's no need to feel down..."
- 15 Cam'ron's breakthrough hit (two words)
- 18 Young, Diamond or Sedaka
- 20 He fell into a burnin' ring of fire
- 22 Rivers Cuomo thinks he looks just like this bespectacled legend (two words)
- 23 *Woo-hoo!* Damon Albarn's non-animated band
- 25 What a Grammy nominee wants to win
- 27 The typical rap CD starts with an intro and ends with an _____
- 28 Detroit's got Eminem; London's got _____ (two words)

DOWN

- 1 This dirty girl's new album is *Stripped*
- 2 Madonna's contribution to the James Bond themes (three words)
- 3 Benny Goodman's woodwind section: clarinet, bassoon and _____, for example
- 4 Tom Petty's latest album, *The* _____ (two words)
- 5 MTV's annual award (abbreviation)
- 8 Her rap sheet is still *Under Construction*
- 9 Twin brothers with new album *The Young and the Hopeless* (two words)
- 12 This group rocks — so "get over it!" (two words)
- 16 Bonnie Tyler was holdin' out for a _____
- 17 Hip-hop band from "Illadelphiah" (two words)
- 19 The woman who got Clapton on his knees
- 21 One Knight with the Pips
- 24 Def Leppard: "_____ some sugar on me!"
- 26 Britpop band with single "Burn Baby Burn"

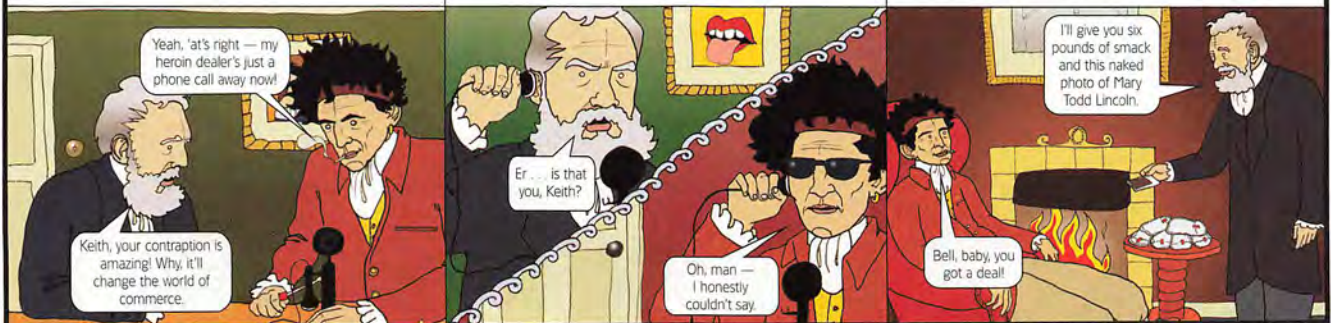


POP HISTORY! January 1876: Keith Richards Invents the Telephone! Illustrated by Daniel Hansen

Can you imagine life without the telephone? No! One cannot underestimate the importance of this device — or of its inventor, Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards.

Ever the team player, Richards enlisted Alexander Graham Bell to test his new appliance.

In February 1876, immediately after its initial successful test, Bell persuaded Richards to relinquish the rights to his "Tele-Phone Machine."



He's the 31-year-old Matchbox Twenty singer with the beautiful wife, exotic taste in sex and a well-deserved reputation as "the nicest guy in rock." But can this porn enthusiast and pal of Carlos Santana tackle this little teaser...

BY ROB TANNENBAUM
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEGO

WHO DOES ROB THOMAS THINK HE IS?

What can we learn from the self-portrait you drew?

First, I think I'm a damn handsome man. You can see that right off.

You're sitting here holding a cigarette in your left hand and a cup of coffee in your right. So what's your favorite drug?

Pot. I'm a pretty big pothead. And not the "Whoa, hemp can save the world" kind of pothead. I smoke pot most days. It's not like I'm driving a school bus, y'know?

Do you perform stoned?

The shows are a lot of fun high. I used to party a lot heavier. VH1 came to film a show. I'd been up for two or three days, and I did some acid. At one point, it looked like the lights were going to cave in on me. I don't know how I made it through.

What's your favorite curse word?

If I call someone *fucko*, that makes me happy. "Hey, what's up, fucko?" And I love *cunt*. It's a magical word.

What will you be doing on your fiftieth birthday?

I'll be sitting with a 57-year-old Adam Duritz, writing songs. Then I'll take some Viagra, and my wife and I will have sex all night. It'll be great.

OK, so describe your taste in sex.

Um, slightly deviant. I like it a little on the dirty side.

Are you pulling hair, or having your hair pulled?

Oh, I like both. I like a little slap-around, both ways.

What happens when you're drunk?

I cry and listen to country music.

What do people who don't like you say about you?

"He has that whole nice-guy thing." I'm from the South, so I'm inherently geeky. We come to the city and we really are glad to meet you. It's not a put-on.

Have you ever shaved any body part other than your face?

I shaved between my eyebrows once. I just didn't feel like plucking. And I cut off too much of one side, so I had uneven eyebrows.

So how punk are you?

I was more punk at 16. I found this club called Visage in Orlando, and I could go see the Chili Peppers, the Violent Femmes, the Cure, Front 242. I had a blue mohawk, black eyeliner — I was a goth kid.

Are you a good boy or a bad boy?

I'm a good bad boy. I drink too much, smoke too much, curse too much, party too much and I like deviant sex. But I'm also a good boy: I don't want to trash my hotel room, because I feel bad that somebody's mother has to clean it up the next day.

What's your position on pornography?

I'm a fan of pornography. I'm a porn guy. Twice, my wife and I went into porn shops to check out some toys and some videos, and I got recognized. So I'm standing over a counter of dildos, signing an autograph. "I love your music, man." "Great! Give me a copy of *Afro-Whores* and some Ben Wa balls, and I'll sign for you." Ha ha ha!

And then what did you sign?

I LOVE PORN. [BLENDER]

➤ I drink too much, I smoke too much and I like deviant sex.



JEANS BY DIESEL
JACKET BY MATSUDA
BY YUKIO KABAYASHI

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